



Cover (left) George Washington's monogram and Bryan Fairfax's tobacco mark, enclosed in a circle to indicate their close friendship.



George Washington: original terra-cotta bust by Jean Antoine Houdon, sculpted from life at Mount Vernon in 1785. Courtesy of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

Published
in
Commemoration
of the
Two-Hundred-Fiftieth
Anniversary
of the
Birth of
George Washington

* * * 1732-1982 * * *

A FAIRFAX FRIENDSHIP

*The Complete Correspondence Between
George Washington and Bryan Fairfax,
1754-1799*

EDITED BY
DONALD M. SWEIG
and
ELIZABETH S. DAVID
ASSOCIATE EDITOR



Prepared for, and under the direction of,
The Fairfax County History Commission
by the
History and Archaeology Section
of the
Office of Comprehensive Planning
Fairfax County, Virginia
January, 1982

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

John F. Herrity, Chairman

Joseph Alexander
Thomas M. Davis, III
Sandra L. Duckworth
Nancy K. Falck

Audrey Moore
Martha V. Pennino
James M. Scott
Marie B. Travesky

* * * * *

J. Hamilton Lambert, County Executive

* * * * *

Fairfax County History Commission

William A. Klene, Chairman

Bernard N. Boston
C. J. S. Durham
Denzil O. Evans
Mary M. Fahringer
Ceres Gaskins

Dana K. Greene
Jack Hiller
Virginia B. Peters
Donie Rieger
Edith M. Sprouse

Mayo S. Stuntz

* * * * *

Theodore J. Wessel, Director
Office of Comprehensive Planning

Donald M. Sweig, Editor of Historical Publications
Elizabeth S. David, Associate Project Editor

Library of Congress Card Catalog Number—81-70298
Printed in the United States of America

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface and Editorial Method	vii
Introduction	1
Prologue: A Personal View, by C. J. S. Durham	13

LETTERS

* * * *A Friendship Established* * * *

1754-1773

Fairfax to Washington * 24 June 1754.....	41
Fairfax to Washington * 15 September 1758	42
Fairfax to Washington * 20 July 1768	43
Fairfax to Washington * 30 July 1768	44
Fairfax to Washington * 19 October 1769	47
Fairfax to Washington * 16 February 1770	49
Fairfax to Washington * 16 April 1770	50
Fairfax to Washington * 6 December 1770.....	51
Washington to Fairfax * 12 December 1770.....	52
Fairfax to Washington * 20 December 1770.....	53
Fairfax to Washington * 20 January 1771	54
Fairfax to Washington * 14 April 1772	54
Fairfax to Washington * 15 July 1772	55

CONTENTS

Fairfax to Washington * 3 August 1772	56
Fairfax to Washington * 2 December 1772	57
Fairfax to Washington * 1 January 1773	58

* * * *The Revolutionary Year* * * *

1774

Fairfax to Washington * 21 May 1774	59
Fairfax to Washington * 3 July 1774	60
Washington to Fairfax * 4 July 1774	62
Fairfax to Washington * 17 July 1774	65
Washington to Fairfax * 20 July 1774	72
Fairfax to Washington * 5 August 1774	75
Washington to Fairfax * 24 August 1774	83
Fairfax to Washington * 27 October 1774	85

* * * *The War Years* * * *

1777-1783

Fairfax to Washington * 21 September 1777	87
Washington to Fairfax * 24 September 1777	89
Washington to Fairfax * 25 September 1777	90
Fairfax to Washington * 25 September 1777	91
Fairfax to Washington * 1 October 1777	92
Fairfax to Washington * 8 December 1777	93
Washington to Fairfax * 1 March 1778	96
Fairfax to Washington * 29 March 1778	98
Fairfax to Washington * 10 April 1778	100
Fairfax to Washington * 14 January 1779	104

CONTENTS

Fairfax to Washington * 18 August 1779	105
Fairfax to Washington * 18 January 1782	107
Fairfax to Washington * 21 March 1782	108
Washington to Fairfax * 22 April 1782	109
Fairfax to Washington * 26 December 1782	110
Washington to Fairfax * 5 February 1783	111
Fairfax to Washington * 22 March 1783	113
Washington to Fairfax * 15 June 1783	114
Fairfax to Washington * 19 July 1783	115
Fairfax to Washington * 4 August 1783	116

* * * *The Reverend Mister Fairfax and President Washington* * * *

1786-1796

Fairfax to Washington * 9 January 1786	120
Washington to Fairfax * 10 January 1786	121
Fairfax to Washington * 7 February 1786	123
Fairfax to Washington * 16 November 1787	124
Washington to Fairfax * 6 April 1789	125
Washington to Fairfax * 6 January 1790	126
Fairfax to Washington * 7 February 1790	127
Washington to Fairfax * 19 March 1792	132
Fairfax to Washington * 17 February 1793	133
Washington to Fairfax * 6 March 1793	134
Fairfax to Washington * 19 March 1793	135
Washington to Fairfax * 9 April 1793	137
Washington to Fairfax * 8 September 1794	138
Fairfax to Washington * 4 November 1794	139
Washington to Fairfax * 3 January 1796	140

CONTENTS

* * * *A Visit to London, "My Lord"* * * *

1798-1799

Washington to Fairfax * 15 May 1798	143
Fairfax to Washington * 15 May 1798	144
Washington to Fairfax * 18 May 1798	146
Fairfax to Washington * 17 June 1798	147
Fairfax to Washington * 21 August 1798	150
Fairfax to Washington * 7 September 1798	155
Washington to Fairfax * 20 January 1799	157
Fairfax to Washington * 28 April 1799	163
Washington to Fairfax * 26 November 1799	167
Washington to Fairfax * 30 November 1799	168

* * * FINE * * *

PREFACE

Background

It has been nearly a decade since Fairfax County History Commission member, C. J. S. (Jack) Durham, first suggested to the staff of the History Section of the Office of Comprehensive Planning that the correspondence between George Washington and his close lifelong friend Bryan Fairfax either be published as a collection of letters or used in the preparation of an interpretive historical study of their friendship. In the intervening years, other historical priorities delayed consideration of the Washington/Fairfax publication. Then, in the summer of 1980, the Commission officially requested Theodore J. Wessel, Director of the Office of Comprehensive Planning, to have his history staff undertake publication of the letters in time for the celebration of the two-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of Washington's birth in 1982. After consultations with the History Section staff, the Director agreed with the Commission's request.

Subsequently, in the fall of 1980, several members of the Commission became aware that Jack Durham had already prepared a historical study based on and including excerpts from this same correspondence. A copy of the Durham manuscript was forwarded by the Commission to the History Section for consideration for publication with or in place of the actual letters. After discussions between the Director, the history staff, and a subcommittee of the Commission, it was agreed that publication of the letters would best

PREFACE

serve the purpose of making available to interested citizens and students the character of this unique friendship between two members of Fairfax County's eighteenth-century ruling elite, and also in conveying the general flavor of those times. Jack Durham offered to prepare a shorter version of his study to be published along with the correspondence as a "personal view." This shortened version was subsequently further condensed and edited by Commission members Dana K. Greene and Donie Rieger and is published here, without substantive editing, as the Prologue.

Collection, transcription, and preparation of the letters for publication was begun in June 1981. As all of the letters in this present collection will eventually be published in their proper chronological sequence, and with full scholarly apparatus and annotation, in *The Papers of George Washington*, now being prepared at the University of Virginia, it was decided not to attempt a scholarly, definitive edition here. The present edition is primarily intended to make all of the correspondence between Washington and Bryan Fairfax available in one volume both as a convenience to the interested public and to specifically elucidate the friendship between the two men. For these reasons, printed sources of the documents have been used whenever possible, and editorial annotation has been kept to a minimum.

The majority of the letters from Fairfax to Washington, through 1774, was previously published in Stanislaus Murry Hamilton, ed., *Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers*, 5 vols. (Boston, 1898-1902); many of those from Washington to Fairfax are included in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, 39 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1931-1940). Several additional letters from Washington to Fairfax, or receiver's copies of transcriptions published by Fitzpatrick, are in Peter Walne, ed., "George Washington and the Fairfax Family: Some New Documents," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXVII, no. 4 (1966). Where no printed version of the letters existed, transcriptions were made from the originals, or xerox copies of

PREFACE

originals, in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the Virginia Historical Society.

Appreciation is extended to the two historical societies for providing copies of, and permission to reproduce, letters in their collections. Ellen McCallister, Librarian, and John Rhodehamel, Archivist, Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union, were as always invaluable in providing materials and information. Suzanne Levy and Eric Grundset, in the Virginia Room of the Fairfax County Public Library, were both patient and helpful with the numerous requests for information. Dr. Paul Sifton at the Library of Congress was both kind and helpful in arranging for access to the originals of many letters in order to accurately check transcriptions. A special word of thanks must go to Professors W. W. Abbot, Editor, and Dorothy Twohig, Associate Editor of the *Papers of George Washington*, for providing a checklist of all the relevant extant material that their extensive research has uncovered, and for opening their files to aid in the acquisition of transcriptions. This volume could not have been prepared without their assistance.

* * * * *

Editorial Method

As this is not intended to be a definitive edition, no attempt was made to assure that every letter is reproduced exactly as written regarding such matters as capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. For letters reproduced from printed sources (Hamilton, Fitzpatrick, or Walne) the transcriptions as given there are reproduced here. The reader is referred to these sources for editorial policy regarding any changes which may have been made to the originals, or to the originals themselves. Directly below the headings "Washington to Fairfax" or "Fairfax to Washington" in this volume, enclosed in square

PREFACE

brackets, is the source of the letter printed below, along with the holder of the original. For example, [Hamilton, DLC] indicates our copy came from Hamilton, the original is in the Library of Congress. Only two abbreviations are used: DLC for Library of Congress and VMHB for the Walne letters in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. A single entry within the brackets indicates our transcription from the original held by that repository. The following guidelines were used in the transcriptions of original manuscripts:

1. The date and place of composition, when available, have been placed at the top of each letter; when at bottom in original, this information has silently been moved to the top. Any added information has been placed in square brackets; this was also done in letters from printed sources.

2. All closings have been printed as straight text, with paragraph indention, without regard to physical placement on original document. Similarly, all signatures have been placed on bottom, at right. Supplied signatures have been placed in square brackets, likewise in letters from printed sources.

3. Original spelling, capitalization, and punctuation have been retained. Supplied punctuation or expanded abbreviations are in square brackets. Superscript letters (Y^e, M^r., G^o.) have been placed in line (Ye, Mr., Go:). Crossed out words have been printed with a line through them; if clearly a mistake on the writer's part and of no textual value, such mistakes have been omitted. Other errors such as repetition of words have been retained.

Every effort has been made to reproduce the letters as written; supplied information within brackets has been kept to the minimum necessary to impart sense to the general reader. No omission of content or modernization of text has been done.



Bryan Fairfax, as an Anglican clergyman. Artist unknown. Fairfax County Photo Archives.

INTRODUCTION

George Washington was sixteen years old when, in February 1748, he came to live with his half-brother Lawrence at Mount Vernon, the Washington family plantation in Fairfax County. Indications are that the young Washington was an impressionable and ambitious young man, eager to get on with the business of life. The year before, in 1747, his mother had decided that he should not go to sea and seek a maritime career. Instead, George undertook the art and science of surveying. He surveyed various Washington lands near Fredericksburg in the summer of 1747 and in February 1748 surveyed a Mount Vernon turnip field for Lawrence.

The adjacent plantation to the south of Mount Vernon was Belvoir, the site of the resplendent mansion of the most important man in Virginia's Northern Neck, William Fairfax. William was fifty-seven in 1748; he was the crown's collector of customs for South Potomac, presiding justice of the Fairfax court, county lieutenant, and a member of the governor's Council of Virginia. It was he who, in 1741, had, as a burgess from Prince William County, achieved passage of the legislative act creating, in the following year, the new County of Fairfax from the northern portion of Prince William.

Also in residence at Belvoir were William's eldest son, George William, age twenty-three, and Thomas, sixth Lord Fairfax, the proprietor of the entire Northern Neck of Virginia

(5,282,000 acres). It was a grand, important, and powerful household to which the Washingtons at Mount Vernon were linked not only by being neighbors but by the marriage of William's daughter, Anne, to Lawrence Washington in 1743. Thus, young George had more than one reason to visit the great house down the river when he arrived at Mount Vernon in February 1748. Chance and fate now took a powerful hand in the life of young George.

By coincidence, a surveying party was about to set out in early March 1748 to survey Lord Fairfax's lands in the Virginia wilderness along the South Branch of the Potomac River. George William was to represent His Lordship's interests and George Washington was invited to come along, perhaps with the hope or promise of doing some surveying. Washington accepted the offer, and by the time he and George William returned to Belvoir and Mount Vernon a month later they were fast friends. Washington became a frequent visitor at Belvoir where William and Lord Fairfax also bestowed friendship and advice on the young man. Their example, and presumably their favor, did much to mold the character and advance the fortunes of young George.

Bryan Fairfax, William's youngest son, was born in 1736 and was Washington's junior by four years. From 1747 until 1754, Bryan was living with his mother's family in Salem, Massachusetts. Shortly after his return to Belvoir, he wrote the first known letter between the two young men. On 24 June 1754, Bryan wrote a short note to George, who was then in command of the Virginia militia on the western frontier, that he was glad to hear of reinforcements to Washington's command, and that more troops had landed at Alexandria and were on their way to him. The following year Bryan was serving in the militia under the command of his friend and neighbor Washington.¹

1. The best extended treatment of Washington remains Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington: A Biography* 7 vols. (New York, 1948-1957); for his relations with the Fairfaxes see vol. I, and for the surveying trip, I, 199-223; see also Charles Cecil Wall, *George Washington: Citizen-Soldier* (Charlottesville, Va., 1980), I-36. On the Fairfaxes see Kenton Kilmer and Donald Sweig, *The Fairfax Family in Fairfax County: A Brief History* (Fairfax, Va., 1975), esp. 5-17, 25-42.

A regular correspondence was apparently begun four years later in 1758. In a letter of 15 September, Bryan began "in answer to your Enquiry," indicating a prior letter from Washington; near the close of the same letter he wrote "as we have now begun I shall be extremely proud to cultivate a Correspondence" Their ensuing exchange of sentiments was to last until Washington's death in 1799, a span of over forty-one years.

There are sixty-nine extant letters between the two men. The forty-five from Fairfax to Washington is nearly twice the twenty-four from George to Bryan. Among the sixteen remaining letters written before 1774, only one is from Washington to Fairfax. Only during the decade 1786-1796 does the number of letters from Washington (nine) exceed that from Fairfax (six). The ten letters in the last two years of Washington's life, 1798-1799, are equally divided between the two old friends. All the known letters between Washington and Bryan Fairfax are reproduced in this volume. Washington's copious correspondence with other members of the Fairfax family (nearly 150 items) is not included here but should be consulted in arriving at a complete picture of Washington's relationship with the Fairfaxes.

Many letters are clearly lost. Washington's letter to Fairfax that initiated the 15 September 1758 reply is a documented case in point. Bryan's letter of 30 July 1768, the first extant since 1758, also refers to a now lost letter "since I wrote to you last." There is no way of telling the number of letters written by either man that have gotten lost or been destroyed in the two centuries since they were written.

The disparity in the number of surviving letters between the two is primarily attributable to the lifestyle and subsequent importance of the receiver. Washington was both a careful record keeper and became an increasingly important man. His own natural inclination to keep incoming correspondence was carried on by others when he was commander-in-chief of the Continental Army and later as the first president of the United States. Letterbook copies were made of much of his outgoing

correspondence from which several of his letters to Bryan are known. After his death, his fame was so great that his letters were preserved in public and private collections.

Fairfax was probably less careful with his papers than was Washington. He lived in at least four different residences in northern Virginia. Although he may have taken better care of his friend's incoming letters after Washington achieved great fame, which would explain the significant increase in the number of surviving letters from Washington to Fairfax in the later years, the almost total lack of letters from Washington in the early years almost certainly results from Bryan losing or disposing of the letters from his friend. Whatever the cause, the unequal number of surviving letters, especially during the early years, gives a one-sided picture of their friendship. It is surely possible that to the young, ambitious Washington his friendships with the great and powerful William, George William, and Lord Fairfax may have relegated his relationship with Bryan, a younger man than himself and an officer under his command, to a minor position in his social priorities. If so, the death of William Fairfax in 1757, the departure of Lord Fairfax to the Shenandoah Valley in 1760, and finally George William's return to England with his wife in 1773 and his subsequent death in 1787, six years after Lord Fairfax, may have all strengthened Washington's friendship with the remaining living resident member of the family that had had such a great effect on his life. Without a more representative sample of the early letters from Washington to Bryan Fairfax, the extent and true character of their friendship during these crucial years cannot be determined. What is clear is that by 1774, and until the very end of his life, Bryan was among George Washington's very closest friends.

In many ways the men were, especially in the early years, social equals in local affairs. Both were literate members of the local governing elite. Bryan and George served together as gentlemen justices on the Fairfax court. They hunted the fox together and traded hunting dogs; they were guests in each others homes, discussed local real estate issues of interest,

and exchanged agricultural information and cuttings. They were solicitous of each other's interests at all times. Even at his busiest, during the war or as president, Washington found time to write to Fairfax or to extend favors to him. In his last days, George seemed especially close to Bryan. On 7 December 1799, Washington dined with Fairfax at Mount Eagle, Bryan's home near Alexandria. Four days later, 11 December, Bryan was a guest at Mount Vernon. On 14 December, 1799, Washington died. The sincerity of their friendship and their deep regard for each other is ever apparent in their letters. In later years, Bryan's solicitude for their friendship almost approaches fawning; Washington's replies, while more reserved, express a similar feeling for his relationship with Fairfax. Theirs was a long and personal correspondence.

All of the letters express the formal cordiality one finds in eighteenth-century correspondence; many are superficial in tone, discussing in passing reference, understood by them but largely lost on the uninitiated reader, personal business involving land transactions, hunting dogs, invitations to visit, and the protracted affair of Mrs. William Savage. Margaret Savage was the widow of the Reverend Mister Charles Green, minister of Truro Parish. When Green died in 1765, he left a trusteeship for her, with Washington and George William Fairfax giving bond to the county court that they would act as trustees and pay her an annuity. When she married Dr. William Savage, probably in early 1767, Savage took charge of her late husband's estate and gave bond to Washington and Bryan Fairfax, the new trustees, that he would see to his wife's £100 per annum annuity. In 1768, Savage took his wife to Ireland leaving his Virginia affairs in the hands of Thomas Montgomerie. Neither Savage nor Montgomerie paid Mrs. Savage as required. She seemed unable to decide whether she wanted her money or not. Dr. Savage repeatedly assured the trustees she did not. The matter continued to plague both Washington and Fairfax for thirty years, until after the death of both Dr. Savage and his wife.²

2 On the Savage affair, see Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington 1766-1770*, II (Charlottesville, Va.: 1976), 181, 182, 228, and letters cited there.

Of a very personal nature are Bryan's moody and introspective reflections on life, and his emotionally based bent toward religion. In his second letter to Washington, 15 September 1758, Bryan, then only twenty-two years old, refers to being "disorder'd in both Mind and Body," but more willing to "bear the Slings and Arrows of outrageous Fortune than venture upon the unknown Regions of Eternity." The suicidal reference is unmistakable. In September 1777, Fairfax set out to travel from Virginia to New York in order to take a trip to England; his quixotic journey was motivated by personal political convictions and an apparent need to declare himself for formal religion. In his letter of 21 September, requesting a pass through the lines of the Continental Army from his friend General Washington, Bryan wrote that "for two years past I have had a stronger Desire to enter into Holy Orders than ever I had before." Failing in his desire to return to England, in August 1779, Bryan again wrote to George reflecting lack of confidence about his ability and his service to the Lord. Other letters include similar reflections about his religious insecurity and indecision. His actions supported his words. Even after his desire to enter the ministry came to fruition with his ordination as a minister of the Episcopal Church of Virginia in 1789 and his induction as rector of Fairfax Parish in 1790, his resolve and course still wavered; he resigned the post in July 1792.

The most intense and interesting series of correspondence was exchanged in 1774, as the Revolution actively began in Fairfax County and elsewhere. There are eight letters in that year, six in July and August alone. These are long, searching letters in which each man expressed an opposite opinion regarding the proper course of action to be taken regarding the recent acts of the Parliament respecting the town of Boston. On Monday, 18 July 1774, there was a meeting of interested and leading citizens at the court house in Alexandria for the purpose of approving a series of resolutions, the Fairfax Resolves, to be subsequently carried to the first Virginia Convention at Williamsburg as the "sense of the people" of the

County of Fairfax. The resolves had been prepared by a committee of leading citizens of whom Washington and George Mason were the most prominent. Bryan could, and as an interested leading citizen perhaps should, have attended this meeting. Yet he chose to express his objection in a letter to Washington that arrived only at the last minute. Bryan's basically Tory position, as set forth in this long letter, also showed the same equivocating lack of resolve as his stand on religion. Parliament should be given "a good Opportunity to repeal the Acts complained of... Americans ought to consider the Majority of the english [*sic*] Parliament... as acting from honest tho' erroneous principles... mild Behavior contributes to a Reconciliation in any dispute... I ardently wish that no Resolves had been now entered into." Then, apparently unable to sustain the force of his own convictions, he nearly reversed his opinion. "As most of the Colonies seem determined on them [*resolves*], and many Counties here [*Virginia*] are also entering into them; perhaps it would be prudent in this County to join also, as the Colonies ought to be unanimous." Prudence and unanimity were important concepts to Bryan. Taken with his other doubts and insecurities, they reveal him as a man unsure of his convictions, or what his actions should be.

Washington's reply on 20 July was also long and forceful. His expressions fall within what has come to be categorized by recent historians as the standard Whig position regarding the actions and motives of the British Parliament; yet it was a firm position, there was no equivocation from the master of Mount Vernon.

In his very long and detailed rejoinder to Washington (5 August), Fairfax again specified how and why the colonies should submit to parliamentary authority. But even before he could set forth his points, some of which were logically telling, Bryan undermined his argument by assuring Washington "you have no Reason Sir to doubt your opinion; it is I that have Reason to doubt mine when so many Men of superior Understanding think otherwise." Several pages later he closed

with "I must apologize for this Letter, hoping You'll[sic] excuse it."³

This extraordinary exchange of letters between Fairfax and Washington in the summer of 1774 reveals not only an honest difference of opinion on matters of politics and political action, but a profound difference in the basic character of the two men, and in the way they reacted to events and circumstances in a rapidly changing world. Washington expressing his opinions strongly, grasping any chance to be part of the action and thus to affect the changes taking place, and Fairfax equivocating on nearly every point, shying away from a part in the procedure. Not only did he not attend the meeting on the resolves in July, but in spite of Washington and others urging him to stand for election to the Virginia Convention, he declined to do so for fear "I could not give Satisfaction in general upon this Occasion." And this, written on 3 July, before a committee to prepare the resolves had even been appointed.

The final intense spate of surviving correspondence between the two men occurred in 1798 and 1799, very near the end of Washington's life, and was occasioned by Bryan's second and final trip to England. Washington's deep regard for his friend is evident in his letter of 15 May 1798, with which he included "Letters of Introduction to [English] Gentlemen with whom I occasionally correspond," as well as a "Genealogical account of the family of Fairfax," that had been presented to him by the Earl of Buchan. Washington also expressed the desire that he and Mrs. Washington should "call" and "wish you a pleasant passage," either in returning from the "Federal City" in about ten days or, if the ship would sail before then, they would "in a morning's ride come up for that purpose."

Bryan's trip was long and allowed him to write four extended letters to his friend, one from Hampton Road, after coasting southward, two from London, and one from York. In his letter from London, 21 August 1798, Fairfax noted "I have since my Arrival taken on me the Title of Lord Fairfax," which

3. On the Revolution in Fairfax County, see Netherton, Sweig, *et al.*, *Fairfax County, Virginia: A History* (Fairfax, Va., 1978), 83-118.

he was entitled to do, as the eighth Lord, upon the death of Robert, seventh Lord, in 1793. Characteristically, he qualified his decision as something "I should have done some years sooner had I known it was becoming to assume it & that it was not contrary to the American Constitution." Reflecting his new station, the letter is signed merely "Fairfax."

Washington did not take immediate notice of his friend's assuming the title. His next letter to Fairfax, 20 January 1799, began in the usual manner, "Dear Sir." But in his final two letters to Fairfax, 26 and 30 November 1799, both written within three weeks of his death, Washington addresses his friend and correspondent of forty-five years as "My Lord." Such was the character of their friendship.

Viewed over time and in retrospect, the correspondence between George Washington and Bryan Fairfax yields little of substantive interest regarding their lives or times. But the letters taken as a whole reflect on the very different character of the two men. Washington's letters are cordial and sincere, but to the point, reflecting on the ambitious, successful man who wrote them. Washington went from prominence and success in local affairs to lead the Continental Army and establish independence for the fledgling states. Through his service as president of the Continental Convention of 1787, and his two terms as president of the new nation, he helped to found and establish the United States and to sustain the infant republic during the crucial first years. He was a man of vision and of action. As his letters to Bryan after 1774 show, he was able to adapt and change with the times and circumstances. His fame endures.

Fairfax, born to a noble and important family, lacked Washington's conviction of the proper course of action. He shied away from political office or public conflict. He rose no higher than a justice of the county court. His actions, reflected in nearly every letter, reflect insecurity, timidity, and a lack of resolve about his feelings. He equivocated about his religious convictions, about his political sentiments during the Revolution, about assuming the title, and about numerous other

matters. This is evident in both the substance and tone of his letters to Washington. He apologized, increasingly in later years, for numerous particulars, for the paper he wrote on and the sentiments expressed, for writing too frequently or bothering "Your Excellency," for not meeting his friend at the gate when Washington stopped momentarily to dispatch a letter to the house. He appears as a man unable to grasp at life and make it do his bidding, and thus who lived always in the fear of fate. He seemed unable to change with the times. In a bold new land he had neither the courage nor the direction of his friend at Mount Vernon. Yet, that friendship grew and strengthened as time passed, and the character of their relationship is embodied in the lifelong correspondence. To read their letters is to discover not only something of each man and of their times but also something of their unique friendship.

DONALD M. SWEIG

2 September 1981



George Washington in uniform of Virginia Militia Colonel, by Charles Willson Peale (1772). Courtesy Washington and Lee University (Washington-Custis-Lee Coll.)



George William Fairfax, brother of Bryan Fairfax. Courtesy of Virginia State Library.

PROLOGUE:

A Personal View
by C. J. S. Durham*

Trying to find the day-to-dayness of the past is a difficult task at best even when you have hundreds, perhaps thousands of documents, engravings, and portraits. It is next to impossible to portray the witnessing of life in time past when these materials, the tools of the historian's trade, are few and far between and those you are lucky to find are dull, bent, or broken.

Before the camera and the radio, there was little enough that the historian could grasp to delineate, for those who delight in being taken backward in time, how those who went before us lived: what they ate, drank, wore, how they built their mansions and hovels, how the very ground they walked on and turned over in the spring looked. There were letters, by literate persons, of course, but even these are rare enough the further back you travel.

*Mr. Durham, an original member of the Fairfax County History Commission, lives at Towlston Grange, formerly owned by Bryan Fairfax. He wishes to thank D. Anne Evans, researcher; Evelyn Fox, Bonnie Lyons, and Lois Dean, typists; and Dana Greene, for assistance in preparation of this essay.

During colonial times in America, the writing of letters was a rare thing. Probably 5 percent of the population could read and write; vital documents of life and death were signed with an "X" by the remainder. In the Fairfax-Washington letters we are privileged to have a tantalizing glimpse of the relationship of two men who early developed a lifelong friendship, as well as the life they lived and some of the dominant ideas of their times.

In this volume are letters of two men, one who came to have a worldwide reputation and the other a country parson who, although the inheritor of an extremely large estate and who became the first American eligible to sit in the British House of Lords, remained a land-poor preacher, a solitary Bible scholar, and an ecclesiastic who valiantly tried to shore up the fortunes of the Episcopal church in colonial Virginia.

The contrast between the two could not be greater. Shortly after Washington's death, Napoleon Bonaparte, then First Consul, ordered that his statue be placed "in the Great gallery of the Tuileries," with those of Demosthenes, Alexander, Hannibal, Scipio, Brutus, Cicero, Caesar, Marlborough, Prince Eugene, the Marshal of Saxony, Frederic the Great, and Mirabeau. Washington, had "succeeded in obtaining recognition from the French Bonapartists, monarchists, former emigres, and liberals for the highest and purest republican virtue of which he appeared as the living embodiment."¹

Recognition of Washington has been worldwide. Outside the continental United States, a total of 145 features have been named for him, including 22 mountains, rivers, islands, capes and arms of the sea, 16 statues and monuments, 96 streets and plazas, and 11 villages. Within the United States, other than streets, buildings, schools, and monuments, there are nearly 450 features named for Washington, including a

¹ *Moniteur, Pluviose, 20, 1800*, in Gilbert Chinard, ed., trans., *George Washington as the French Knew Him* (Princeton, N.J., 1940), IX, XV.

state, 32 counties, 257 townships, 121 cities, towns and villages, ten lakes, nine streams, and seven mountains.²

On the other hand, where are the encomiums to the Right Reverend Bryan Fairfax, Baron of Cameron? Upon his retirement as rector of Christ Church in 1792, his neighbors profusely thanked him in a resolution recorded in the vestry minutes. Little enough. And there was William Meade, the nineteenth-century doctor of divinity, bishop of the Episcopal Church of Virginia, who refers to Lord Bryan Fairfax as being "a pure and conscientious man and a neighbor of General Washington. . . [who] was much attached to him and the elder Lord Fairfax, with whom he had lived."³ There are no statues to the clergyman, only a burial shaft and a portrait of him in the old Fairfax County courthouse, along with those of his life-long friend, Washington, and of Thomas, sixth Lord Fairfax, Washington's valuable benefactor. That is about all.

A close reading of the letters between Washington and Bryan Fairfax, while not providing all the answers regarding their friendship, will disclose in Bryan a complex personality of great sensitivity and integrity, and will also throw some light on the differing ideas of the Revolutionary war and the roles the unknown clergyman and his friend played when those ideas clashed.

As We Have Now Begun

The name of Fairfax is closely associated with two momentous uprisings of Englishmen, and with two distinguished leaders of those uprisings: Thomas, third baron of Cameron, the hero of Naseby, and Thomas, sixth Lord Fairfax, who retired to the wilds of colonial Virginia and became the friend of George Washington, a leader in the American Revolution against the English crown. Edward D. Neill wrote that "the Fairfaxes in England produced Cromwell's first general for the

²Lawrence Martin, ed. *The George Washington Atlas* (Washington: D.C. 1932).

³William Meade *Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia* (1) (Phila: Pa. 1906), 7.

1648 Civil War; the Fairfaxes of Virginia produced America's first general."⁴

Neill came upon some letters of the English Fairfaxes in this manner: in the year 1822, during some repairs to the Fairfaxes' Leeds Castle, England, an old chest containing some Dutch tiles and Fairfax family papers was sold to a poor shoemaker of a neighboring village. The papers were scattered, some being used by the local makers as winding spools for thread. Eventually, what remained came to the attention of George W. Johnson, barrister, who edited and published them in London in 1848. A supplement to those letters was discovered by a friend of Neill's and the two bundles were published together. In 1956, another group of Bryan Fairfax's letters, some published here for the first time, was found by the author of this essay in the manuscript room of the Library of Congress.

The father of William Fairfax, of Belvoir on the Potomac, was Henry Fairfax, sheriff of Yorkshire, who was the son of the fourth Lord Fairfax. William was born in 1691, educated at Viscount Lansdale's collegiate school and later went to sea when very young. Returning from this voyage he served in the British army in Spain under Colonel Martin Bladen, who had married a Fairfax. He was stationed for a while in St. Helena, then later in the Bahamas where he met and married Sarah Walker, and was subsequently appointed chief justice of the island. About 1725 he moved to New England where he was appointed to the lucrative post of collector of customs at Salem and Marblehead, Massachusetts. On January 18, 1731, his wife died, leaving him with four children. He later married Deborah Clarke of Salem, a close friend of his first wife.

Hearing that his former land agent, Robert "King" Carter, was not faithful to his interests, Thomas, sixth Lord Fairfax, proprietor of the Northern Neck of Virginia (some five million-odd acres), invited his cousin William to leave Salem and become superintendent of his estates. The offer was accepted

⁴Edward D. Neill, *The Fairfaxes of England and America in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany, N.Y., 1868), 7.

and the William Fairfax family moved, in 1739, first to Westmoreland County, Virginia, and, two years later, to a plantation called Belvoir, fourteen miles below Alexandria. William's daughter Anne, by his first wife, married Lawrence Washington, who settled four miles above Belvoir at Mount Vernon, named for Admiral Vernon under whom Lawrence had served in the British navy.

George Washington, Lawrence's younger brother, at the age of fourteen years came under the influence of William Fairfax who had used his influence to secure a berth for him in the British navy. On September 10, 1746, Lawrence Washington received a letter from his father-in-law: "George has been with us and he says he will be steady and follow your advice as his best friend. I gave him his mother's letter, with a caution not to show his.

Not long after this, however, George's uncle, Joseph Ball, wrote to George's mother, "I understand you are advised, and have some thought of putting your son to sea. I think he had better be put apprentice to a trade, for a common sailor before the mast has by no means the common liberty of the [king's] subject: for they will press him from ship to ship where he has 50 shillings a month, and make him take 23, and cut and beat him like a negro, or rather like a dog. And as to any considerable promotion in the navy it is not to be expected, as there are always so many going for it here, who have influence and he has none."⁵ George's mother refused to let her son become a sailor, a decision that was to affect the world's history.

Although a treaty of 1744 had required the native Indians to remove west of the Blue Ridge, roving hunting bands were still encountered and made living on the frontier of the Potomac sometimes an anxious business. In a June 1774 letter from Laneville, Kent County, Virginia, to Bryan's half-brother George William, Richard Corbin wrote, among other things, that "the

⁵*Ibid.*, 50

Indians are committing devastations in the upper part. Several skirmishes have happened. God knows how there things will end."

The life of the early settler on the upper Potomac was one of extreme hardships. The natural environment was still largely as captains John Smith and Henry Fleet had seen it during the early years of the seventeenth century. Smith, in 1608, described the Little Falls, and probably the Great Falls, as awesome sights to behold in the midst of almost impenetrable forests of virgin trees and treacherous laurel "hells" on both sides of the Potomac River. Fleet, a captive of the Indians for several years, after his release became a wealthy trader and sent numerous cargoes of Indian goods back to England. He found the area that later became Fairfax County "pleasant and healthful" and abounding with fish and game.

Virginia, in the time of the Fairfaxes and Washingtons, had changed since the days when Smith and Fleet had first explored the Potomac River. Rich plantations were to be found along the banks of the river extending many miles inland until the falls of the Potomac were reached and the mountains could be seen in the hazy air that hung over the Blue Ridge. Beyond the tidewater was the piedmont, with fewer plantations. Tobacco and wheat farms were laboriously worked by both slaves and free men. Here the rough "rolling roads" were almost impassable for the tobacco hogsheads and produce carts pulled by horses, oxen, and men. Settlers were isolated. The solitude of the wilderness was heavy and, to many, frightening. John Davis, an English traveler around the turn of the nineteenth century, walked from Washington, D.C., to the Great Falls of the Potomac, which he could hear five miles away from the cataracts. He marveled, when he viewed them, that "God had always chosen the secret and solitary places in nature to perform his miracles."

Not all Virginians in the tidewater and piedmont were great planters housed in beautiful mansions. "For every planter with

his gang of slave laborers there were many small farmers. They were Virginians too; so were the slaves who worked on the plantations, and the servants who were earning their freedom, and the merchants and artisans." Virginia was not only a vast territory (at one time it claimed land as far as the Pacific) but a place where, in the course of a history almost as long as that of independent America today, a complex society had already developed. Some Virginians were so poor they did not have a roof to cover them. Others were surrounded by servants and slaves who provided them with every luxury. At the top of the scale stood the great planter, owner of a mansion on one of Virginia's noble rivers, where he lived with his family and servants. He would be a member of the House of Burgesses, or of the governor's council, owner of a house in Williamsburg where he and his family lived during fashionable public times when the legislature was in session. Between this man and the farmer there was a wide gulf in wealth, education, and occupation that was to persist, in large part, through the Revolutionary era. Indeed, "Virginia never again presented the unique pattern of colonial times."⁶

It was into this unique society that Bryan Fairfax was born. He was the first child of his father's second wife, Deborah Clarke. He was born in Westmoreland County on August 11, 1736. While Bryan was still a boy, his father, William, vested him with several land grants in what became upper Fauquier County, aggregating 4,999 acres on Goose Creek and Little River. Later he was given more land by Thomas, the sixth Lord, bringing his total to some 30,000 acres. After Bryan's mother's death in 1747, he was not sent to England for his education as were his brothers, but was sent to be trained as a merchant in a counting house in the Barbadoes. At the end of several years residence in the West Indies, the "place not suiting his

⁶Edmund S. Morgan, *Virginians at Home: Family Life in the Eighteenth Century* (N.Y., 1951)

desires," he received his father's permission to return to Virginia in February 1754.⁷

In 1754, when he was seventeen years old, his father had been able to secure for him a deputy clerkship "in some good County," when a vacancy should occur, pending which he volunteered to serve as a cadet under the command of his young friend Washington, to fight against the Indians at Winchester.⁸ It was during this service on the frontier at Winchester that he had his first religious experience. While he was on sentry duty from midnight until two in the morning, he sent his fellow sentry away and "as soon as I was alone, I kneeled down, and determined not to rise but to continue crying and wrestling with God until he had mercy on me."⁹

Upon a reorganization of the regiment, Bryan was commissioned lieutenant of Captain George Mercer's company and with it was stationed at Fort Cumberland for six months. In April 1757, a disappointment in love ended his military career. While on leave he had attended "several merry meetings and dancing in Westmoreland and Essex" in the course of which he "addressed" a young lady and was refused. Without his father's knowledge he sent in his resignation, decided to enlist under an assumed name in the northern regulars, and had gone as far as Annapolis when his brother-in-law John Carlyle persuaded him to return home, where he was commissioned captain of one of the two detached companies of Fairfax militia which were assigned to frontier service. Before his company had seen any active duty the pressure of the Indians was relieved and the militia was withdrawn.¹⁰

Bryan was then twenty-two years old and Washington twenty-six and at Winchester in command of the Virginia

⁷Fairfax Harrison, *Virginia Land Grants: A Study of Conveyancing in Relation to Colonial Politics* (Richmond, Va., 1925).

⁸The appointment was made at the request of Peter Wagener, Clerk of Fairfax County, February 20, 1754. Fairfax County Deed Book C-1, 660, in Fairfax County Courthouse, Fairfax, Virginia.

⁹Neill, *Fairfaxes of England and America*, 175.

¹⁰Harrison, *Virginia Land Grants*, 173.

forces against the Indians. In 1759, both Bryan and Washington married. The correspondence begun between the two young friends spanned forty-five years, until the death of Washington. The last letter he wrote to Bryan, concerning a 275 acre lot of land on Difficult Run, near what is now Colvin Run Mill Park, was dated a month before his death. The last social visit Washington paid was to Bryan and his second wife Jane at Mount Eagle.

Who was this shadowy figure, this religious patrician, traditionalist, member of the great English family whose attentive friendship to the young George Washington was so marked, effective, and long-lasting? What did the young Washington see in the young Fairfax that cemented this life-long and affectionate friendship, one that survived during the good times and bad of a society in peace and war?

Only a few of the mists may be dispelled in this volume of letters, but at its close a fuller picture may be seen of an unknown backwoods parson whose affection for Washington outlasted all of the Fairfax family of his time, as well as many of Washington's political friends. It may be said that Bryan's friendship for Washington was closer and longer than that of any other person except Martha, his wife.

Bad Times and Good

From 1761 until 1765, when he visited England, Bryan lived with his first wife, Elizabeth Cary, first at Belvoir and then at Greenhill, a nearby farm of 197 acres he had purchased in 1761. His first two sons were probably born there. On 4 March 1767, a party from Mount Vernon "was to drive to Towlston, near Difficult Run, where Washington was to stand as godfather for Bryan's third son." Colonel William Fairfax had

styled it Towlston Grange, after his birth place in Yorkshire, "but the shortened name was more frequently used."¹¹

The first reference to Towlston that occurs in the letters between Washington and Bryan is from 20 July 1768, written at Alexandria. The Virginia census of 1782 (predating the first federal one of 1790) noted Towlston Grange as consisting of one dwelling, ten outbuildings, and six slaves. Bryan was also a justice of the Fairfax County court, having been appointed to the post in 1759, six years before Washington's similar appointment. The duties of a planter and a justice of the peace, which included every aspect of public business of the county, took up the time of the young and inexperienced landholder, now on his own. His estate now totaled some twenty-thousand acres and management of these lands was a pressing task.

It was thus not all riding to the hounds during these years. "The times were out of joint. Everyone seemed to owe everyone else." And so the natural result was a return to primitive barter. Although Bryan Fairfax, fox-hunter and land-owner, was hit as hard or harder than anyone else, for he did not have the resources of Washington, there is no record of his adversities, except obliquely in the fragments of the 1772 diary of his daughter Sally. Still we may get a notion of the hard times from noting the vicissitudes of his wealthier friend at Mount Vernon. "There developed between owner and tenants an inclusive system of barter concerning which, in sickness as in health, Washington had to make many ledger entries. . . ."¹²

Bryan Fairfax used this system of barter to provide a livelihood when he could and also supported his family with loans from Washington to help meet expenses, as well as from the

¹¹Douglas Southall Freeman, *The Life of Washington*, III (N.Y., 1951), 227.

¹²*Ibid.*, 192, 64. Sally's diary is reprinted in Kilmer and Sweig, *Fairfax Family*, 90-100.

sale of his lands to the master of Mount Vernon.¹³ Financial matters are clearly a dominant theme in the correspondence between Fairfax and Washington during the early years of the 1770s. Debts, land purchases, and other financial matters are frequently discussed. (See letters of 15 July 1772; 3 Aug. 1772; 1 Jan. 1773; 3 July 1774.)

Fairfax's economic vicissitudes are paralleled in the 1760s by attempts to establish domestic life at Towlston Grange. In 1759 he married his first wife, Elizabeth Cary of Ceelys. She was a sister of Sally Cary, the wife of George William Fairfax of Belvoir. Bryan's perturbed spirit floated over the first days of the marital life of the newly-weds. Several years after his marriage and subsequent move to Greenhill, he and his wife moved again to Towlston Grange, near the Great Falls of the Potomac, which his father had given him when he began to get restless.

On 17 November 1760, a few months after Bryan and Elizabeth were married, John Carlyle of Alexandria, who had been looking after George William Fairfax's affairs in the county, wrote, among other things, to the latter in England:

Your brother Mr. B. Fairfax is much altered, and is quite tired of Tolston for want of company. He determined to take a house and lot in this town, but Colonel George Lee (who has been up to see us) put him out of it by telling him it would cost him £200 per annum. Now he is fallen upon another scheme. You must remember a little house Mr. Green bought on M

¹³George Washington loaned £150 to Bryan Fairfax in 1769, the year, or that following Bryan's removal to Towlston Grange. In 1769 the merchant Thomas Adams wrote to his agent in London that "at present let a man's estate by what it will and his necessities what they may he cannot borrow 100 pounds," adding that "it is impossible for the ablest men to comply with their engagements" (Freeman, *Life of Washington*, III, 242). There were long periods when Bryan could not sell his lands or make sufficient money from his crops and he would have to borrow from relatives and friends. On one occasion Thomas Lord Fairfax wrote to Bryan that he had recently had a large demand for cash and that he could not supply all that was asked for in Bryan's letter, but would be able to give part of it when Bryan came to Greeway Court where they would be able to hunt, adding that he had left a hound for Bryan at Leesburg.

Green's land, your brother has taken a lease of that place for his—life and is about scantlings, making bricks and is to be living there next spring. In 5 years time he proposed to see England. You see it is hard for us to know what would make us happy in this life. His utmost wish was to be settled at Towlston, and he now would not live there for the world.¹⁴

George William replied on 17 April 1761 to Carlyle's letter, saying that he was not surprised that his brother Bryan was tired of Towlston; he "soon tires of anywhere."

Some friendly advice was given to Bryan in a letter of 16 February 1763, by Robert Carter Nicholas, in Williamsburg. Nicholas told Bryan he need not apologize for not sending £3, which he would be welcome to use as long as needed, adding that he was glad to hear Bryan had moved to Greenhill from his old home and hoped that the change would come up to expectations. Nicholas had no intention of ceasing to correspond merely as a result of a difference in their status. He had a smaller beginning than Bryan and if by hard work he became well off, it would only become that he was born to. Though Bryan was just starting off in life, industry and application would conquer difficulties. He advised Bryan that though he was well-meaning and philanthropically inclined, he must remember he was living in a harsh world and that he may have to change his ideas without damaging his principles.¹⁵

As early as 13 June 1759, the delicate health that was to trouble him all his life was revealed in a letter from Bryan at Williamsburg to his wife Elizabeth at Rich Neck, a Cary home. He asked that his bay horse be sent down, that Elizabeth write while he is away, and told her he would not return until his

¹⁴The quotation is from Carlyle's full letter, made available through the courtesy of T. Michael Miller of the Alexandria Public Library. The other letters concerning Bryan's early life at Towlston and other domiciles are abstracts of letters from the Gays House Collection in the State Archives in Richmond and are used with the kind permission of Nicholas, Lord Fairfax, 14th baron of Cameron, London.

¹⁵This early cautionary advice to Bryan from Nicholas was indeed prudent but not heeded. Bryan was too generous for his own good. After Bryan was ordained by Bishop Seabury, he sent the latter £300 as a gift. In 1798, he sent another £200 to the late Bishop's destitute family.

health was better. On 16 July 1759, Bryan wrote to his wife at Hampton from Belvoir, hoping she would write frequently. He said he hoped to regain weight when they settled at Towlston, but did not expect to be able to move there until workmen were well ahead on "my Houses," probably in a month.

Just about on schedule, Bryan was on his way to England. On 27 March 1765, he wrote Elizabeth from Philadelphia that he hoped she would agree to visit London during the summer, and if Bryan should be out of town, Mr. Athawes (friend of the Fairfaxes) would supply her wants. He was sure the children (probably Thomas and Billy) wanted to see her as much as she must want to see them. About three weeks later, on 18 April 1765, while waiting at Philadelphia for his ship to be loaded, Bryan informed Elizabeth that Tommy had what might be whooping cough, for it was in their boardinghouse. Smallpox was also in the next house but so far the children had not been infected and he was now sorry he did not have them inoculated even though Elizabeth was against it. He hoped she would consider whether they would be better if they were together for the London trip, but if she was still against it, thinking that he would be back soon from Philadelphia and was not back within a year, perhaps she would then think of coming over. It was cheaper to live in England and, indeed, in Philadelphia, with proper remittances from Virginia and economical living.

The separation of Bryan and Elizabeth continued through the next year. Bryan wrote Elizabeth from Alexandria on 22 December 1766 to ask for news about Billy who had been very ill. Tommy, he wrote, had been ill all the fall with intermittent fever. On 8 January 1767, Elizabeth wrote Bryan on the reverse of the Christmastime letter, noting that Billy had quite recovered, and expressed concern at the news of Tommy. Since there was no news of Sally, she presumed she was well. She concluded in the tone of his own "cool Letter," that she was, "Yours, Elizabeth Fairfax."

Eleven days later, on 19 January 1767, Bryan in Alexandria wrote to Elizabeth at Ceelys, saying that while he was glad to get her letter he was sorry she found fault with the way he wrote. He was the more concerned because, despite momentary resentments, he wanted to live with her and also, despite "jars and contentions" between them, it would be better than total separation. The children were anxious to see their mother; Sally cried when Elizabeth's latest letter arrived. He said that he would try to make things easier for Elizabeth by getting a gentlewoman to live in, but had not been able to do so. One person at "George Town" offered to come in October at £20 per annum, but Bryan thought this was too high a price, and had asked his sister if she could find one with more reasonable terms. If Elizabeth could find one, she was to let him know. Tommy was well, could say letters, dance the minuet with his sister, sing, and had good taste as he preferred the Delian God to any other song. Sometime during the next year the young couple apparently decided to reconcile their differences and try to live at Towlston Grange.

War Clouds

Rumblings of the rupture between England and the American colonies could be heard by the politically weather-wise more than a decade before the storm broke. In 1765, when Britain passed the Stamp Act, the event caused attention in the minds of the large land speculators, as Washington wrote when he noted that the act "engroses the conversation of the *speculative* part of the Colonists."¹⁶ For Bryan, who was in England that year, the event was of passing interest. He was more concerned with his private affairs and the move from Greenhill, with Elizabeth, to the new home at Towlston.

In 1765, neither Bryan nor any other colonist was contemplating disunion. Through efforts of British politicians favora-

¹⁶Marcus Cunliffe, *George Washington: Man and Monument* (Boston, Mass., 1958), 65

ble to the colonists the Stamp Act was repealed and for three or four years it seemed as though life would continue the even tenor of its ways on the Virginia plantations. But the faint echoes from across the water were heard again. The Stamp Act was followed by the Townshend Acts, and Bryan's friend Washington was sufficiently aroused to play a leading part in 1769-1770 in agreeing not to import taxable goods from Britain. It was at this juncture that the relationship between the two boyhood friends was being put to the test—at this point and again in 1774 when the Fairfax Resolves were put forth at a meeting in July of that year.

The inhabitants of Fairfax County had assembled and appointed a committee for drawing up resolutions expressive of their sentiments on the great topics that agitated the country. Washington, George Mason, and others were on this committee. The report prepared by the committee, generally known as the Fairfax Resolutions, was presented at a general meeting of the inhabitants at the courthouse in Fairfax County on 18 July. Bryan, who had been present on former occasions, did not approve all the resolutions and absented himself from this meeting. He wrote a long letter to the chairman, stating his views and objections, with the request that it should be publicly read.

The different political persuasions of Bryan Fairfax and Washington illustrated in their responses to the Fairfax Resolves is made clear in a series of eloquent letters between them. (See letters 3 July 1774; 4 July 1774; 17 July 1774, 5 Aug. 1774; 24 Aug. 1774.) On the difficult issue of war and peace, Fairfax maintained that the colonies should exhaust all their administrative remedies before resorting to war, while Washington believed that British actions were "repugnant to every principle of natural justice" and must be forcefully responded to.

The Peacemaker Moves Toward Holy Orders

From 1775 to 1777 correspondence apparently ceased between Bryan Fairfax and his longtime friend, now a general

and head of a rebel army. We have no record by Bryan of the preparations for war in Fairfax County. To the man of peace such activities were abhorrent and it is likely that he tried to put them out of his mind as much as possible. Then too, he was preoccupied with his perennial problem of "bearing the Cross."

The next letter between the conservative Virginia planter and the Revolutionary general was written by Bryan on 21 September 1777, from Colonel Thompson's at the "Conestoga Waggon," about eighteen miles below Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Bryan recurs once more to his oft-repeated wish to enter into holy orders.

The complex nature of Bryan Fairfax, his sensitivity, his transparent gentleness—perhaps an inverted arrogance—his inner naivete, and his deep religious feeling are shown in the correspondence with Washington during 1777 and 1778. (See letters of 21 Sept. 1777; 25 Sept. 1777; 1 Oct. 1777 (2); 8 Dec. 1777; 1 Mar. 1778; 29 Mar. 1778.) Nowhere does Fairfax more clearly reveal his religious feelings than in the letter of 8 December 1777, from Towlston where he says "no man is better acquainted with you than I am," and lets loose his feelings in a most revealing way.

For the early part of the 1780s the correspondence between Washington and Fairfax deals with the economic interests of these two men, most specifically the construction of a mill on Difficult Run. Fairfax's religious preoccupation emerges again in a letter from Towlston dated 18 August 1779, which discloses that he, then forty-two years of age, was still uncertain about taking holy orders. This dilemma was solved in 1786 when Fairfax received the sacrament from Bishop Seabury in Connecticut.

Although the motivations, aspirations, and general intellectual views of George Washington are well known, those of Fairfax are not. It is impossible to understand the latter's world view apart from the religious milieu in which he lived and which posed for him so many dilemmas. Central to his religious concern was the question of holy orders.

Ordained in 1786, Fairfax succeeded the Reverend David Griffith in 1789 as rector of Christ Church in Alexandria, a position he held until 1792 when he resigned. Being a clergyman at any time is an unrewarding job even if measured only in material terms. Bryan Fairfax's family in England was filled with clergymen and scholars as well as soldiers, but the life of the clergy there was easier and carried a somewhat higher social status than in colonial and early republic days of America. Bryan's father had wanted to be a clergyman. The continuity of the religious disposition is apparent in Bryan, although his happiness may sometimes be considered at question.¹⁷

The state of the Anglican church in Virginia in the middle years of the eighteenth century certainly could not have contributed to Bryan's serenity. In his two-volume *Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia*, Bishop William Meade does not question the piety and fidelity of some of the people and pastors of the time "but that its spiritual condition was ever, at any time, even tolerably good, bearing a comparison with the Mother-Church, over whose defects also there was so much cause to mourn, faithful history forbids us to believe," adding that "such being the corrupt state of the Church in Virginia, it is not wonderful that here, as in England, disaffection should take place, and dissent begin."¹⁸

Of course, dissent had begun and Fairfax would be greatly influenced by it. The mid-years of the eighteenth century saw

¹⁷Neill, *Fairfaxes of England and America*, 37-38

¹⁸Robert Morgan Moxham, *Early Colonial Churches of Northern Virginia* (Springfield, Va., 1974)

the rise in England and America of the dissident religious groups known as evangelicals, or, commonly, enthusiasts. Their beliefs emphasized salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ through personal conversion, the authority of the Scripture, and the importance of preaching as contrasted with ritual. They were Low Church fundamentalist offshoots of the High Church of England, their beliefs stemming from the doctrines preached by George Whitefield, John Wesley, and others. In action they were zealous, ardent, and militant. Bryan's dilemma, his desiring to spend his life in the ministry but thinking it improper without some "human authority," turned him toward this rising Methodism. On the other hand, to refrain from priesthood simply because of the anarchy that seemed to exist on all sides, "and Sinners want reclaiming and perhaps no Peace 'till a general Reformation, may be as wrong"—all this threw him "into a most distressing Perplexity" that had accompanied him almost all his life. He was torn between "separation from the world," and becoming a preacher to the world that encompassed the daily work, trials, and tribulations of the people. This conflict led to his acceptance of the doctrine of salvation by grace without the necessary and controlling precondition of work and obedience.

This doctrine runs through the years, like Ariadne's thread. First established by the Puritans in Europe as a shield for religion against the state, "separation from the world" underwent a sea-change in America when the Puritans imposed their own moral doctrine in law codes that held fast for almost two centuries, culminating in the belief that evangelism is the last best hope for America and the world. It is so, because of its basic founding upon the belief that Christ will come in person to set up a kingdom of God over the whole world, thus ushering in the millenium, the rule of an authoritarian, hierarchical (bishops, pastors, teachers, etc.), chain of command.

Bryan Fairfax was definitely influenced by "the method." Meade pointed out that Fairfax's choice for an assistant at

Christ Church was Bernard Page, who "was very decidedly of the then rising evangelical school in the Church of England and a very zealous preacher of its doctrines particularly of the school of Whitefield." Meade maintained that Fairfax was a sympathizer of the principles of that school as well.

One of the earliest influences inclining him to "the method" was the Countess of Huntingdon, a convert to Methodism, who was so kind to him, in London, asking him many times to visit her chapel for day and evening services, and to hear the singing of the clerk from the Song of Solomon. Another friend was Lady Anne Erskine, who "talked the same language" as he did and thought that "the Lord is at work with me and I shall certainly become a Calvinist." These sentiments he reported in a letter to his second wife, Jane, from York, 23 September 1798, when he was sixty-one years old.

Bryan conceded to Lady Anne that he "now believed in the perseverance of the Saints," but added that he would never believe the "Christ did not die equally for all men." He had longed for the pure and holy "City on a Hill," first envisioned by the Puritans. But now, having turned away from the strict Puritans, Bryan looked toward the evangelicals, hoping they might provide him with an ultimate good. The doctrine of salvation by grace, toward which he had laboriously evolved, carried him close to those who believed in direct and instant salvation if only they would be born again. But here, as in so many areas of Bryan's "perplexing" life, nothing is fixed, life's sands are ever shifting, and we are not sure where his beliefs were placed unambiguously.

That religious considerations continued to be central in Bryan Fairfax's thinking even after the question of holy orders was resolved is illustrated in the 1790s both in letters to Robert Carter concerning Swedenborgism and in his published work, *Strictures on the Second Part of the Age of Reason*.

In 1792 Fairfax wrote two letters to Robert Carter of Nomini in which he shows his sympathies for Swedenborg but rejects him ultimately because he found some of his ideas inconsis-

ent with Scripture. These letters are important, however, because they indicate his theological evolution from High Church Anglicanism to a more evangelical view of religion. He thought that "man that is possessed of divine Faith and Love is safe, whether he be a Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or Methodist, and I have reason to believe that there are some of all these persuasions, as well as of other, who are possessed of these Essentials; and that a right Apprehension of the Trinity is not absolutely requisite when it is incomprehensible to many who have the Essentials above men-tioned."¹⁹

The 1790s also saw the publication of Fairfax's *Strictures* by the "press of Green, English and Company" of Georgetown as a response to the second part of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, which appeared two years earlier in 1795. In *Strictures*, Bryan wrote that he believed the Bible to be as "divine original" as firmly as he received a proposition in Euclid. Whatever God has declared should be received as true, whether we comprehend it or not. Some things are incomprehensible but they are not therefore repugnant to reason, "because to be incomprehensible and repugnant are two different things." How is a man in these days to know that the Bible contains the truth as revealed from Heaven? "The answer," Bryan wrote, "is that when he is born in a Christian land, he is brought up as a believer." It is the duty of those who are the ministers of the gospel to "enforce and illustrate" the word of the Bible, "as far as they can and to remove the obstacles to the truth." What Thomas Paine considered as a proof against the validity of the Scriptures was to Bryan "a proof of their authenticity."

Bryan observed that Paine's book was filled "not only with trifling, but generalized observations and intermixed with so many witticisms that it is probable a great part of it never will be noticed, by way of confutation." Besides, he added, "some of his sayings are so horrid and shocking that his refuters will hardly venture to repeat them, but instead thereof, may sup-

¹⁹Letter Bryan Fairfax to Robert Carter 7 Dec 1792, copy of letter in possession of author

plicate Mr. Paine with earnestness to address himself to that great, just, and good Being, that peradventure he might have mercy upon him and open his eyes." At another point Bryan chided Paine: "O Fie, Mr. Paine! What a blunder you have made!" Bryan continued to reason with Paine and he took up the latter's criticisms of books of the prophets one by one until he concluded his consideration of the Old Testament and turned to the New Testament, writing in his opening paragraph: "Some of Mr. Paine's observations on the New Testament must be passed over because they are not fit to be mentioned, for however boldly some men may sport at divine truths there are others who cannot venture, or care not to repeat them." He then goes on to refute Paine's attempts to show the story of Jesus Christ to be false," stressing his view that "the gospels were written chiefly for the benefit of believers; the Church received the writings, and believers were edified thereby."

Before Bryan took up his point-by-point confutation of Paine, he wrote that "as Mr. Paine is wrong in his principles, his conclusions must be wrong too, for there is such a thing as reasoning right from wrong principles, as well as reasoning wrong from true ones. In both cases the conclusions will be unjust." Bryan found Paine's complaints of contradictions throughout the Bible unrealistic, "because after all those seeming inconsistencies might perhaps be explained as well as many others have before." He added that, "among men of truth we see a man at one time seemingly inconsistent with what he had said at another, . . . and of this many instances might be given. He will sometimes give one reason for his conduct on any certain occasion and sometimes give another . . . But these things," he wrote, "only require to be explained and there is no difficulty, no more than there is when the Lord by one prophet assigns one reason for punishing a people, and by a different prophet or by the same prophet another reason is given, for the difficulty is removed when it is known that both the reasons given concurred in the determination."

Given his personality it is strange that Fairfax should have been a polemicist or that he should take on Paine, the greatest polemicist of the age. Yet what we see here in the *Strictures* is a polemicism rooted in religious belief. It flows from essentially religious assumptions.

To London and Back

The letters of the 1790s between these two friends are sparse. On 7 February 1790, the new Episcopal clergyman continued to give advice to his boyhood friend, this time about his thoughts on the constitution for the new United States of America. Then three years later on 17 February 1792, he wrote again from his new home, Mount Eagle, below Alexandria.²⁰ Fairfax's letter on 17 June 1798, from Hampton Roads discussed a host of things connected with his proposed voyage to England. The main purpose of this trip was to investigate the prospects of assuming the title of Lord Fairfax, eighth baron of Cameron, and also to look after some estate matters.

Fairfax wrote two letters to Washington from England (21 Aug. 1798, and 7 Sept. 1798). These were answered by Washington on 20 January 1799, the last year of the century and of Washington's life. This was a warm and newsy letter about crops, politics, and domestic matters. But there was a crisis in America. The French nation that had decisively helped the struggling colonies throw off the yoke of the British was now conceived as the enemy. Washington stood ready once again "to gird on the sword, if the immergency [*sic*] should require it" to defend "the permanent Peace and happiness of

²⁰After a lifetime of ownership of an inherited estate of 30,000 acres, Bryan, when he built Mount Eagle about 1789, could only afford (or did not want) a house larger than a story-and-a-half, containing six rooms, a passage, and a front porch, of about the same dimensions of Towlstou Grange

this rising Empire." On 29 April 1799, Fairfax replied to Washington's letter telling him he planned to sail for home in a few weeks. He left London secure in his title of "His Lordship." A letter dated 26 November 1799, is the first evidence of Washington's recognition of Fairfax's new claim; he addressed it to "My Lord." In this and a subsequent letter of 30 November 1799, Washington expressed his concern about the boundaries of the 275 acres on Difficult Run, near the present Colvin Run Mill. This last letter was Washington's final correspondence with Fairfax. In a month George Washington would be dead. Bryan was one of the six principal mourners at the Mount Vernon funeral. In his will, George left his boyhood friend the large three-volume Bible that formerly belonged to the "Bishop of Sodor and Man," which had been presented to Washington by the bishop's son, the Right Reverend Thomas Wilson. Although the correspondence of forty-five years was now concluded, Bryan wrote one more letter about his friend. It was to a cousin of his in England. In it he quotes Dr. James Craik, Washington's longtime friend and physician, as saying that Washington's last words were, "I die hard."

Bryan Fairfax outlived his boyhood friend by only a few years. He died 7 August 1802. A memorial shaft stands in Ivy Hill Cemetery in Alexandria to him and others of the Fairfax family. Whether his restless spirit is at last at rest no one knows.

Readers of the Washington-Fairfax correspondence will come away with a variety of impressions. They are letters of a bygone age, in a script sometimes convoluted and sometimes clear as a bell, written not only with the common civility and familial piety of the time, with its formality, dignity, and deference, but with courteous magnanimity and, as the years passed, affectionate respect between the two authors, the one with the nicest regard for his rectitude, the other mainly for the

deepest integrity of his soul. There must have been something in each man that reached out to the other. How else could the lifelong friendship have lasted? Never mind on whose side fires burned the brighter.

C.J.S. DURHAM

*Towlston Grange
Great Falls, Virginia
August 1981*

STRICTURES

ON THE

SECOND PART

OF THE

AGE OF REASON.

By Bryan. Lord. Fairfax

GEORGE-TOWN:

FROM THE PRESS OF

GREEN, ENGLISH, & CO,

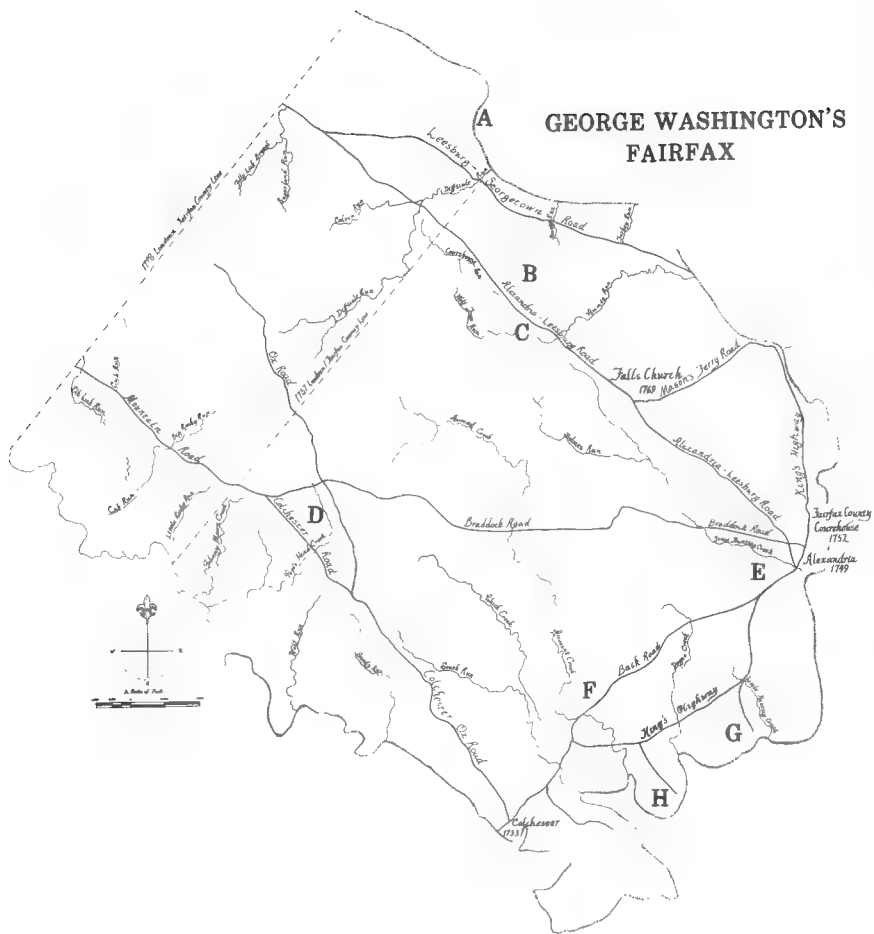
M,DCC,XCVII.

Title page of Bryan Fairfax's response to Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*.
Courtesy of New York Public Library.



Bryan Fairfax. Courtesy of Virginia State Library.

THE
Washington/Fairfax
CORRESPONDENCE



- A.** Patowmack Canal around Great Falls of Potomac, begun 1785.
- B.** Towlston Grange, Home of Bryan Fairfax, ca. 1768-1790.
- C.** Original Fairfax County Courthouse, 1742-1752.
- D.** Hope Park, home of David Stuart, step-father to Martha Washington's grandchildren, after ca. 1785-1790.
- E.** Mount Eagle, home of Bryan Fairfax after 1790.
- F.** Greenhill, home of Bryan Fairfax, ca. 1760-1765.
- G.** Mount Vernon, home of George Washington.
- H.** Belvoir, home of Fairfaxes, 1741-1773.

I

A Friendship Established

1754-1773

** Fairfax to Washington **
[Hamilton DLC]

Alexandria June 24th: 1754

DEAR SIR

The agreeable and long wished for News of the detachments under the comand of Major Muse and Captn McKoy having joined you in time to prevent the Success of any Attacks from the french, was very satisfactory to me; whose mind was continually alarmed with the Apprehensions of your being forced to another battle when unprepared for it.

The Triton arrived here the 22d with the two Companies from New York, tho' not compleat And a fair Wind yesterday brought up a Schooner with 107 Men, belonging to the No. Carolina Regiment that are on their March.

My Sisters are not yet returned from below, but expected in ten Days.

With best regards to the whole Corps, and wishing you all imaginable Success I remain Yr assured friend and Very humble Servt

BRYAN FAIRFAX

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[Hamilton, DLC]

Belvoir, Sepr the 15th. 1758

DEAR SIR,

In Answer to your Enquiry I can scarce say whether I am alive or dead: I have been so long disorder'd both in Mind and Body that I am really between both. Disappointments in Love & repeated Colds have reduced me much; however tho' I am sensible of the Follies of this Life I am no ways desirous of leaving them: I had rather bear the Slings and Arrows of outrageous Fortune than venture upon the unknown Regions of Eternity. The Prospect is gloomy even when viewed by a Mind that thinks itself prepared for the Journey; but how dismal it must appear to those who are unprepared for it! As this is Case there seems to be no Wonder why we are so unwilling to leave this World of Troubles and Anxieties.

I am concerned Sir to find you want Employment for from Experience I know a State of Idleness to be very disagreeable. Such a close Confinement and such a constant Round of Inactivity must prove very irksome to one capable of Action; and if you had complained more of the Follies of this Life and the Uncertainty of it's Enjoyments; in your present Situation Sir I should not have been surprised at it.

As we have now begun I shall be extremely proud to cultivate a Correspondence, and if you choose to give me your Sentiments on the Campaign whatever you desire to be kept secret shall remain so—

My best Wishes, Sir, attend You to the Woods of Action; and that you may return in Safety is the sincere Desire of Yr. most obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

We have heard Nothing of my Brother since he left N. York—

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[Hamilton, DLC]

Alexandria July the 20th 1768—

DEAR SIR

I have received your favor of the 20th and am the more confirmed in the Opinion I had of Doctor Savage's being fully persuaded that his Wife really & sincerely desires the Relinquishment of the Bond, and therefore am not at all surprised that he should in such case desire it also. The Week before the last she sent to me desiring that I would make a demand for the money and also that I would meet her at Greenhill, and by the return of the Messenger I wrote to Mr. Savage & in plain terms told him that his Wife was averse to the giving up the Bond, and that I informed him of it to save him any further trouble about it, and yet [that] I might not be under Necessity of giving another Refusal: at the same time making a Demand for the Money due. When I met her on Thursday last she shewed me my Letter to the Dr and told me it had given her vast uneasiness, and gave me to understand that she was notwithstanding to ask me again for the Bond at that meeting: which must certainly in my opinion be her own proposal to him. I told her I wished the Bond was given up being heartily tired of it and again begged of her to be frank & candidly own her Sentiments which she seemed to promise; but the manner in which she proposed to declare her Sentiments, convinces me that she will not own her real Inclination, and moreover makes me doubtful whether she will not deny that she ever expressed her Desire to keep the Bond—I see nothing to blame in him about it, for it is very reasonable that he should join with her Desire to obtain it, but from some circumstances I am apt to think he looks upon me as interested, and for that reason if you have no

For details of Washington's and Fairfax's relations with Dr. and Mrs. Savage, see introduction to the letters and sources cited there.

Objection I should be glad if you would also satisfie him with regard to her real Inclination that we may be no more plagued about it. Upon proviso however that you believe with me that she is in no fear of her Life, which is the only thing which can excuse her present Conduct.

I shall be very glad of your company at Towlston² when it is convenient to spend three or four days or more—I can't say my hounds are good enough to justifie an Invitation to hunt, but out of that Regard I have always entertained & which I perceive encreases with Time I shall be extremely glad of your Company and we may then partake of that diversion or not as it may seem agreeable; in the former Case a change of dress would be very necessary. I shall be at home from the 1st. of August 'till our Court except the Monday & tuesday of Loudon Court, and if in that time it should be convenient & you should have an Opportunity of seeing Doctor Romney or any other you choose to attend you No one will be more proud of your Company than sir Yr. most obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[Hamilton, DLC]

Towlston¹ July the 30th. 1768—

DEAR SIR

Since I wrote to you last I have rec[ei]v'd a Letter from Dr. Savage wherein he says that his Wife acknowledges that she had once in a discontented Mood expressed a dislike to parting with the Bond, but that she had fully convinced me at our last meeting of her

²See note 1 to next letter

¹This is the first letter from Fairfax's new home at Towlston, 5,568 acres inherited from his father, William Fairfax, in 1757. An eighteenth-century structure on what was probably the original "house lot" (on Towlston Road near Wolf Trap Farm Park) it is now the home of C.J.S. Durham. (See Kilmer and Sweig, *Fairfax Family*, 39, 67-73.)



Towlston before restoration in 1933. Courtesy of C.I.S. Durham.



Nineteenth-century engraving of Washington and Fairfax foxhunting. From Washington Irving, *Life of George Washington*, 1857.

earnest desire to relinquish it: At the same time Mrs. Savage also wrote to me begging a thousand pardons of you & me for the trouble she had given us, and mentions her Intention of going to Ireland immediately, and desires the Bond may be given up I am to acknowledge your favor of the 25th and entirely agree with you in Sentiments—I have thought proper to mention the contents of the two last Letters, tho' I don't know that it can make an Alteration in our proceedings to obtain the Sum due

I remain Dr. Sir Your most obedt Servt

BRYAN FAIRFAX

** Fairfax to Washington **

[DLC]

[19 October 1769]

DEAR SIR

I beg leave to trouble You with the inclosed two Letters; the one for Mr Pendleton has a little money in it including his fee for his late advice, w[h]ich I received yesterday, and which is expressed in these Words, "I think you & Colo. Washington should not pay the money for Mrs. Savage's separate use, to any person but by a power of attorney from her especially as her changeable temper may subject you to danger in payments made upon her Letters."

I forgot when I was last at Mt. Vernon to inform you that there has been a trespass committed on y[our] Land by the Bridge, and I believe by a Man who a few weeks before carried the chain along the line and therefore can't plead ignorance. He has sawed up one of the finest trees, and if you pass it over you won't have a timber tree left in a few years. I believe I could fix it upon him if you desire it, as I hope you will

I don't know what to think of Try la hunting-dog's name]. The first Tryal I had of him, he, like Sr. Francis Wronghead in the house of commons, did well enough upon the main, only he said ay when he shou'd have said no: that is, he insisted on it for one quarter of a mile that the back scent was the right one till the puppies that were with him refused to join any longer; and I think he did well enough upon the main as he & four puppies killed the Fox and was the leading dog the whole chace. The other time I have been out he never quitted the heels of the horses 'till the Fox was killed but this seemed to proceed from his ignorance that any chace was going forward. I did not know when I accepted of your offer that he was serviceable to any of your people in catching Racoons—would it be improper to write to Mr. Stith to know whether he chooses the dog should be sent back to him, for if he does I will contrive him down to him.

I had Capt. Posey's¹ Advertisement put up the Court House on tuesday—the badness of the day on Monday prevented my getting to Leesburg till the next day. I am Dr. Sir Yr. most obedt. hble. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

For want of a little change I can't close my letter to Mr. Pendleton, and therefore, as I can do some other Business in Town, for I imagine the Court will not sit I purpose down tomorrow, and will do myself the pleasure of being at Mt. Vernon on tuesday night if you should not be engaged and then I shall be glad to see the amount of the shingles We had for our Mill as Mr. R— & I are settling our accounts. If you will be from home or otherwise busy on acco|un|t. of your Journey please to let my man know it and I can send the letters down.

¹Probably Capt. John Posey, who owned land just south of Mount Vernon, from whence he operated a ferry to the Maryland side of the Potomac. In 1765 and 1772, in two separate purchases, Washington acquired Posey's land to form part of his Union Farm.

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

16 February [1770]

DEAR SIR,

I have received the Deeds and inclose the Mortgage to be recorded; and will endeavor to get a Dedimus from Fauquier and have the Other deeds proved before that Court as soon as conveniently can be done. I find from the present date & Tenor of the Mortgage that it is necessary to acknowledge which I hereby do that there is one years Interest due at the Time of the date thereof, which shall be sent down shortly.

I am at present at Mr. Gunnell's or Mrs. Fairfax would gladly have joined me in Complements to You and Mrs. Washington. I am Dr. Sir Yr. most obliged & obedt. Servt

BRYAN FAIRFAX

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[Hamilton, DLC]

April the 16th. 1770

DEAR SIR

Having been travelling five days and not getting home till 11 oClock last night, I find myself & Horses rather too much fatigued to go to Court as I intended—

Mr. Montgomerie informed me at the last Court that he sh[ould] be up at this in order to have his power of Attorney fully proved—and I wrote to Colo. Mason¹ desiring to be informed of the date of his power of Attorney, the one to Mr. Montgomerie being dated the 6th of October 1769—²

I have directed Joe to enquire for a Letter from Mr. Mason and deliver it to You, and I shall be obliged to You to open it, and if the date is not posterior to that of Mr. Montgomerie's and you incline to receive from him as Mr. Savage's Attorney the three years Annuity due, being £300, and pay it to him as Mrs. Savage's, I am also willing, and your Receipt will be as effectual as a joint one from us both. Mr. Montgomerie receiving the money as her Attorney will be answerable to her for it, and this may be a speedy way of getting the money paid to her—for Mr. Montgomerie told me he would settle it in that manner if agreeable to you.

I proposed to have spoke to you in person upon the Subject but being much fatigued I am in hopes this Letter will answer the same End.

I am Dr. Sir Your most obedt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

I shall be obliged to you to excuse my not coming to Mr Montgomerie to whom I made a promise of being at Court, and I have hurried myself too much in order to perform it—

¹Probably Thomson Mason, younger brother of George Mason of Gunston Hall, who lived at Raspberry Plain in Loudoun County.

²Montgomerie was William Savage's attorney. See note 1 under 20 July 1768, above.

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[Hamilton, DLC]

Towlston Decr the 6th 1770

DEAR SIR

I am very glad to hear of your safe Return which I had begun to doubt of—

Poor Rockwood died on his way Home—

I have inclosed a Letter which I received this Fall from Mr. Montgomerie. Please to let me know your Determination, and if you should be inclinable (which I doubt of) to receive a payment from him, and make one to him as Mrs. Savage's Attorney, and will inform me of the place it would be agreeable to you to meet him I will endeavor to be there if possible and the Weather tolerable.

I am Dr. Sir Yr. most obedt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

I think Mr. Montgomerie will be answerable to Mrs. Savage—

I had almost forgot to inform you that Mr. Harrison¹ could not undertake the Suit vs Mr. Mason as he had been retained by him and no Suit has been yet brought as I expected to have seen you soon after I received Mr. Harrison's Letter: so that in Case you don't agree to Mr. Montgomerie's proposal, I hope you'll direct the Suit to be brought by any one you think proper: For tho' we can't refuse an actual payment from Mr. Montgomerie we may one upon condition of repaying it to him—

¹ This may have been Robert Hanson Harrison, an Alexandria attorney who became a private secretary on Washington's staff during the war 1775-1781 and later declined to have Washington appoint him to the initial U.S. Supreme Court.

* *Washington to Fairfax* *
[Fitzpatrick, DLC]

December 12, 1770

D Sir: Having received your favour of the 6th. I profess myself at a loss to know what answer to give to it, and to consult a Lawyer every time we are puzzled by the duplicity of Mrs. Savages' Conduct would sink a large portion of her Annuity, or entail a heavy expence upon ourselves.

I think as you do, that it would seem odd to refuse an actual tender of Mrs. Savage's Annuity from the Doctrs. Agent at a time when we are threat'ning his Security with a Suit on this Accoun[t]. And I am of opinion, that if we do receive the money from him, we can not legally withhold payment thereof from her Attorney (who is one and the same person) without submitting our Reasons for so doing to the Publick attention and her Letters she has expressly requird may not be seen. Without exposing these as the ground of our refusal [we] can have no pretext to detain the money in our hands; to keep it there woud contribute nothing to the relief of Mrs. Savages's necessities but very probably expose ourselves to Censure. And to pay the money to any Person not legally autoriz'd to receive it woud I believe be equally Imprudent. In short, view the matter in whatever light one will there is nothing but doubts and difficulties before us; and I see no effectual method of serving Mrs. Savage without falling into some snare which we may not easily extricate ourselves from for I must confess that I have no good opinion of Mrs. Savages honour on the one hand. On the [other] our attempts to serve her will give us little to expect from the Doctors Friendship if we should drop into a faux pas. Upon the whole, can we, do you think, avoid coming to a Settlement with Mr. Montgomerie without Incurring the Imputation of disengenuity on the one hand; or being too plain in our Reasom's for it on the other; If this can be done. I should be for letting that matter sleep till we coud write a joint Letter to Mrs.

Savage informing her of the predicament in which her Affairs respecting the Bond stands and to beg that she will [mutilated] and fixd to some point or no longer expect us to become the dupes of her fickleness and folly; if you think this method can be adopted no time should be lost in putting it in execution, if you think it cannot or ought not I am willing to pursue any other you shall advise as I own that I am more per[plexed the] more I think of the matter I am Sir, etc.

[G: WASHINGTON]

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[Hamilton, DLC]

Towlston, December the 20th. 1770

DEAR SIR

I have received your Favor of the 14th. and now inclose a copy of my Last Letter to Mrs. Savage, wherein I have told her my Sentiments very freely—and if you disire we should write a joint Letter when we have the pleasure of meeting I shall be agreeable to it I can't conveniently go down till the middle of January so that at present I cant appoint any place of meeting even Mr. Montgomerie—I have some thoughts of being at Alexandria in January Court, but it will depend on the weather & Circumstances. But as to the payment of the Money, I am inclined for my Part, either to settle it as Mr. Montgomerie proposes, or to write to her to know whether she still objects to the payment of the Money to Mr. Montgomerie or not, and if she does to send over another power in room of the other to some other Person—

I am Dr. Sir Yr. most obdt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

** Fairfax to Washington **
[Hamilton, DLC]

Alexandria Janry the 20th. 1771—

DEAR SIR

I have just time to inform you by Mr. Henderson¹ that I sent up to Mr. Smith and acquainted him that I had sold the Tract on little River provided he had not done so; and that he informed me that he had not, having been with some to look at the Land but as they had no Money he would not agree with them; so that you may depend upon having it if you don't dislike it when you come to see it.

With my Compliments to Mrs. Washington I remain Dr Sir Yr. most obedt. & obliged hble St.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

I beg the favor of you to give the inclosed to Mr. Rind.

** Fairfax to Washington **
[Hamilton, DLC]

Leesburg April the 14th. 1772.

DEAR SIR

Doctor Savage tells me that it would be very convenient to him, if you cou'd pay the £150, which you have kindly offered to advance for

¹Alexander Henderson, a prominent local merchant.

me, and for which I return You Many Thanks; to him or to Mr. Montgomerie at the Gen[eral] Court when the Merchants meet, and has desired me to write to you for that Purpose if it should be convenient

I did myself the pleasure to write to you a few days agoe; so that I have nothing further to add but that I am Dr sir Yr. most obedt St.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

** Fairfax to Washington **
[Hamilton DLC]

Towlson July the 15th. 1772

DEAR SIR

I have received a Letter lately from Mr Smith wherein he makes no mention at all of the Tract of 600 Acres on Goose Creek & chattins Run, so that I may dispose of it [to] you without waiting longer for the Man he had agreed with, which it was kind in you to propose I wish we could agree about the Land on Pohick or that on the Kittochtan for which I must take a less price still than I have fallen to; especially considering the Sum you still purpose to advance on Accoun[t] of Mr Muirs Bill which Mr. Baynes lately pressed me to pay. I had some thoughts of riding to Mt. Vernon soon, in order to attend you to pohick but being uncertain on Account of my harvest and haying being backward I take the Opportunity My Sister Washington affords me of writing. Mrs Fairfax & Sally desire their Compliments with Dr. Sir Yr. most Obedt & obliged hble Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[Hamilton, DLC]

Towlston August the 3: 1772

DEAR SIR,

I am about setting off for the Springs, & as I have very little time to spare, having been busy at my Meadow to day & been at the Mill & Great Falls, & having some other Letters to write this Evening, I hope you'll excuse the conciseness of this.

As to the most material Business of Mrs. Savages I have receiv'd a Letter also from Mr. Bomford. On the Receipt of your Favor at Alexandria I went to Mr. Harrison and asked him about the deeds of Settlement when he told me there must have been such before Marriage because the Bond relates to them—and there must be the deeds together with an authentic Copy of the Bond which Mr. Bomford writes for, but where they were recorded neither of us knew but we supposed in the Genl^l. Court or in Loudon where the lands lie, & if I omitted to mention this in my subsequent Letters it was thro' Forgetfulness. As Mr. Montgomerie as you mentioned was expected to be at Alexandria at June Court I desired Mr. Harrison to let me know if he came up and I would go down with his Receipt however inconvenient—And now I have thoughts of sending it by your Boy as I am to be a month from home but am doubtful at present in case it should miscary. I imagine the Deeds executed at Dumfries are not what Mr. Bomford writes from because he mentions all Deeds and Papers executed on or before her marriage.

I have sent inclosed the patent for the 600 Acres which is the only title I have except another deed of the same Tenor & date. I inherit it as heir at Law to My Brother Wm:—I shall be ready to go with you to Pohick when it may suit you after my Return. I am not uneasy tho' disappointed a little (tho' indeed I have no Reason to call it a disappointment as I could not have raised the money without your Assistance) And shall wait till it may suit your Convenience.

As I pass thro' Loudon I will write to Rogers & direct him to send copies of the deeds to you if any such as I mentioned above be recorded in that office.

What you mention about your Puppies is surprising—Murich's Litter last year decreased daily from 8 to 4 and she was observed each day carrying one out

Mrs. Fairfax tells me it was conjectured by some at Mt. Vernon that I wanted my hounds back again that I had sent down, but altho' I have given away hounds before now & been afterwards sorry for it I should never ask for them again even in an indirect manner—but that was not the case with these—I was glad I could accommodate you so well without any disadvantage to myself, and it is not unusual with me to ask for the return of good hounds if they should not please, because as I said before Sportsmen differ, and I should be sorry that you should have occasion to return 'em. Mine have been reduced in their speed I hope by parting wth them having run a Fox lately so long tht [that] I had time to come home to Breakfast & to Dinner before the chace ended to the disgrace of the whole tired pack

Mrs. Fairfax &c Complts. with mine to Mrs. Washington & Family and I remain with much Esteem Dr Sir Yr. most obedt. Servt

BRYAN FAIRFAX

** Fairfax to Washington **

[Hamilton, DLC]

Decemr the 2d 1772

DEAR SIR

When I parted with You on Pohic You did not seem inclinable to take my Land there, and I have therefore been bargaining with Mr. Henderson about it as I owe a debt to the Store in Alexandria. But as I did not know but what You might come to some Terms with Mr. Mercer¹ and in that case choose to purchase mine, I chose to wait till

¹James Mercer, of Spotsylvania Co., Va., owned land near Pohick Creek, but did not sell to Washington. See Beth Mitchell, "Branning at a White Oak: Patents and Northern Neck Grants of Fairfax County, Va. (Fairfax, Va.: 1977), 222.

you return before I shewed the Land to Mr. Henderson, that if you thought proper you might have the preference; for I think myself under many obligations to you. Mrs. Fairfax has been unable to travel so that I could not get the Deed acknowledg'd on her part before Witnesses going to the Gen[er]al Court. But would not the Relinquishment of Dower before the Justice be sufficient? I hope to hear that Mrs. Washington & Family have returned in good Health. I am Dr sir yr. most obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

** Fairfax to Washington **
(Hamilton, DLC)

Towlston Janry the 1st: 1773

DEAR SIR,

Mr. Muir has sent me an Account of the Charges on the protested Bill which has run up very high. As it will be very inconvenient to me to go from home at this time I have inclosed a half Sheet indorsed on which I shall be obliged to You to have drawn the Set of Bills payable to me, and delivered to the person Mr. Muir¹ may send for them. You may have a Mortgage on any of my Lands as a Security till the repayment of the whole money shall be done from the Sale of the Land in which Mr. W. Washington is concerned either at once or in small Payments as I happen to recieve it. We had an Expectation of receiving £500 Pensylvania Money each before this time, but according to Custom have been disappointed.

I am Dr Sir Yr. most obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

¹John Muir, an Alexandria merchant.

II

The Revolutionary Year

1774

** Fairfax to Washington **
[Hamilton DLC]

Alexandria May the 21st 1774

DEAR SIR

We have obtained a Judgement vs Doctor Savage for the whole Sum that we expected, amounting to £600 and upwards. I have since spoke to Doctor Savage on the Matter. He now proposes to leave the Affair to Arbitration, alledging the Equity he might have in a Court of Chancery on Account of the Deed of Relinquishment entered into or executed by Mrs. Savage before she left Virginia. I have told him that my opinion was that we had no Right so to do. However having promised to write to You to know your Sentiments I shall be glad to be informed of them, and also your opinion as to what is next proper to be done. He intimates that the Affair may Still be long before it is determined as he has it or will have it in his Power to appeal and offers to pay the Annuity from the Time that Mrs. Savage left his House in Ireland, and to settle an Annuity in Rents for the future. This Letter being intended only for this Business, I shall only add that I am Dr Sir Yr. most Obedt Sert

BRYAN FAIRFAX

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[Hamilton DLC]

Towlston July the 3d: 1774

DEAR SIR

I am a little surprised that You had not receiv^ed my Letter relating to Doctor Savage when You wrote to Mr. Harrison. I wrote because it was necessary to consult You upon the occasion tho' I believed you would be no more inclinable than myself to agree to any Arbitration. It seems to me a very odd practice this of obtaining Injunctions out of Court when the Equity of it can't appear sufficiently. It will be necessary to have an Answer ready before the next Court

Till I could have an Opportunity of advising with You about a proper Fee to be paid Mr. Harrison who has taken some pains to do Mrs. Savage Justice. I have paid him only the legal Fee of 16 3 and 10 3 which he paid to Mr. Waller for his Advice in regard to a particular part of the proceedings

I shall be glad to know whether you may be inclinable at this time to purchase my Kittocktan Tract I run round it last Fall and found it to contain 1400 Acres 150 of which Mr. Threlkeld claims; the rents of it & of 100 Acres adjoining amount to £27 |per| Annum, besides the Sum of £4 to be paid by a Man I placed on the part Mr. Threlkeld claims in order to keep possession till He ascertains his Bounds which I can't prevail wth him to do. I shall be willing to let you have it for what I owe to you & Mr. Custis Altho' I think the price low, yet I must own it to be more than Mr. Threlkeld offers which nothing will induce me to take but real necessity If the Tenants could raise the money some of them would give almost as much I believe for one half of it. I am so much obliged to You for your Favours that I would let you have it cheaper rather than delay a Payment when Money is so scarce If you thought it ought to be sold for less.

Several Gentlemen of this County have been kind enough to propose me as a Candidate at the next Election. As it would give me a particular pleasure to serve with You, I have thought it very unlucky that it should happen at this time. I have been forced to decline it chiefly because I thought I could not give Satisfaction in general upon this Occasion. For I should think Myself bound to oppose violent Measures now. The Entering upon a Plan of having no Trade would be an arduous Undertaking, I mean if persisted in, and if once entered upon it ought to be strictly kept. I therefore think it would be more proper to try what Effect a petition might have towards obtaining a repeal of the Duty. I would willingly give the Parliament a fair Opportunity to do it, and therefore should be for a petition unaccompanied with any Threats or Claims (for we have already used them) and if such an Opportunity should be missed we might then be better able to judge of their real Intention towards us. If the Parliament had ever so good a Right to lay a Tax on the Colonies which has [been] much disputed, it is certainly very unjust to exercise that Right. But in opposing this we should consider all the Consequences that may follow. Threatenings at this time I am of opinion will have no Effect. I think Whenever they are used they must be followed by a steady perseverance. This must occasion so great Inconveniencess, that many will probably fall off, and so by degrees the whole, which would bring us into Disgrace. For which reason I am for postponing it till the Effect of a Petition be first tryed. I don't speak upon my own Account, for I verily believe that there are not many if the Country entered into a general non Importation agreement, who would submit to greater hardships than myself. I should be for persevering to the End, and therefore slow in entering upon it.

The election was to choose the Fairfax County delegates to the first Virginia Convention held at Williamsburg in Aug. 1774. Fairfax's conciliatory, and pacifist sentiments would not have accorded well with the mood of the Convention, called in the wake of the dissolution of the House of Burgesses by the royal governor, and news of the "Intolerable Acts" from Boston. The election, held 14 July, chose Washington and Charles Broadwater as delegates.

There are scarce any at Alexandria of my opinion and tho' the few I have elsewhere conversed with on the Subject are so, yet from them I could learn that many thought otherwise, so that I believe I should at this time give general Dissatisfaction, and therefore it w^lould be more proper to decline it even upon this Account as well as because it would necessarily lead me into great Expences which my Circumstances will not allow of. My Wife & Sally join me in Compliments to Mrs. Washington & I remain Dr Sir Yr. most obliged & obedt Servt

BRYAN FAIRFAX

** Washington to Fairfax **

[Fitzpatrick, Virginia Historical Society]

Mount Vernon, July 4, 1774.

DEAR SIR

John has just delivered to me your favor of yesterday, which I shall be obliged to answer in a more concise manner, than I could wish, as I am very much engaged in raising one of the additions to my house, which I think (perhaps it is fancy) goes on better whilst I am present, than in my absence from the workmen.

I own to you, Sir, I wished much to hear of your making an open declaration of taking a poll for this county, upon Colonel West's publicly declining last Sunday; and I should have written to you on the subject but for information then received from several gentlemen in the churchyard, of your having refused to do so, for the reasons assigned in your letter; upon which, as I think the country never stood more in need of men of abilities and liberal sentiments

than now I entreated several gentlemen at our church yesterday to press Colonel Mason to take a poll, as I really think Major Broadwater though a good man, might do as well in the discharge of his domestic concerns, as in the capacity of a legislator.¹ And therefore I again express my wish, that either you or Colonel Mason would offer. I can be of little assistance to either, because I early laid it down as a maxim not to propose myself, and solicit for a second.

As to your political sentiments, I would heartily join you in them, so far as relates to a humble and dutiful petition to the throne, provided there was the most distant hope of success. But have we not tried this already? Have we not addressed the Lords, and remonstrated to the Commons? And to what end? Did they deign to look at our petitions? Does it not appear, as clear as the sun in its meridian brightness, that there is a regular, systematic plan formed to fix the right and practice of taxation upon us? Does not the uniform conduct of Parliament for some years past confirm this? Do not all the debates, especially those just brought to us, in the House of Commons on the side of government, expressly declare that America must be taxed in aid of the British funds, and that she has no longer resources within herself? Is there any thing to be expected from petitioning after this? Is not the attack upon the liberty and property of the people of Boston, before restitution of the loss to the India Company was demanded, a plain and self-evident proof of

¹ Washington's neighbor George Mason of Gunston Hall, a short distance down the Potomac from Mount Vernon, Mason was always reluctant for a variety of reasons to leave his home on public business. On the two notable occasions when he did, in June 1776 he produced the seminal Virginia Declaration of Rights, and much of the first constitution of Virginia, and in 1787 was one of only three delegates to the federal constitutional convention in Philadelphia who refused to sign the new document. He was, however, very active in Revolutionary affairs in Fairfax County from 1774 until his death in 1792. Col. West was either John West, Sr., the surveyor of Fairfax County, or his son of the same name, a prominent Alexandria merchant.

what they are aiming at?² Do not the subsequent bills (now I dare say acts), for depriving the Massachusetts Bay of its charter, and for transporting offenders into other colonies or to Great Britain for trial, where it is impossible from the nature of the thing that justice can be obtained, convince us that the administration is determined to stick at nothing to carry its point?³ Ought we not, then, to put our virtue and fortitude to the severest test?⁴

With you I think it a folly to attempt more than we can execute, as that will not only bring disgrace upon us, but weaken our cause; yet I think we may do more than is generally believed, in respect to the non-importation scheme. As to the withholding of our remittances, that is another point, in which I own I have my doubts on several accounts, but principally on that of justice; for I think, whilst we are accusing others of injustice, we should be just ourselves; and how this can be, whilst we owe a considerable debt, and refuse payment of it to Great Britain, is to me inconceivable. Nothing but the last extremity, I think, can justify it. Whether this is now come, is the question.

I began with telling you that I was to write a short letter. My paper informs me I have done otherwise. I shall hope to see you tomorrow, at the meeting of the county in Alexandria, when these are to be considered.⁵ I am, dear Sir, your most obedient and humble servant.

[GO: WASHINGTON]

²In reaction to the destruction of the East India Company tea at the Boston Tea Party, 16 Dec. 1773, the Parliament on 31 Mar. 1774, passed the *Boston Port Act*, which closed the Boston harbor until the tea was paid for.

³*Massachusetts Government Act and Administration of Justice Act*, 20 May 1774.

⁴Washington was here expressing what has come to be known as the "Whig" position on the Revolution. For the Revolution in Fairfax County, see Netherton, Sweig, *et al.*, *Fairfax History*, 83-117.

⁵See note 1, to letter of 17 July 1774, below.

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[Hamilton DLC]

July the 17th 1774

To

GEORGE WASHINGTON, ESQR;

Having been twice lately at Alexandria, and the Business I am engaged in being liable to suffer much by my Absence, I hope I shall be excused for not attending at this Time. As it is necessary however for every one to give his Sentiments on this occasion, I beg Leave to address myself in this manner to You, Sir, as Chairman of the Meeting, and hope it will answer as well as if I were personally present.

Some Resolves being prepared by the Committee, It is now proper to consider them, and to collect the general Sense of the Inhabitants on the Subject: and whatever legal Measures are determined on by the Majority ought to be conformed to by the rest, as a perfect Unanimity ought to appear among us.¹

On Tuesday, 5 July, 1774 a meeting was held in Alexandria to consider what (if any) action should be taken by the inhabitants of Fairfax County in reaction to the *Boston Port Act*, which closed the Boston harbor. Similar meetings were held in most other Virginia counties. At the Alexandria meeting a committee of freeholders was appointed to "frame such resolves as we thought the Circumstances of the Country would permit us to go into." A subsequent meeting was set for 18 July "to deliberate on them" (Washington to "Dear Brother [Charles]" 11 July 1774, typescript in library, Mt. Vernon, the committee members are listed in Peter Force, comp. *American Archives* 1 [Washington, D.C., 1837], 601-602). It was to this meeting, and about the Resolves to be considered there, that Fairfax's 17 July letter was directed. Although the judgement of historians has generally been that the Resolves were "whipped into shape" on the afternoon and evening of 17 July by Washington and Mason at Mt. Vernon, Fairfax's letter of the same date in which he not only refers to resolves by number but objects to specific language indicates that the Resolves were, in fact, a committee effort, and that Fairfax had a draft copy of the Resolves prior to that day. He may have been on the committee chosen to draft them, although he is not among committee members listed by Force. His unwillingness to attend the 18 July meeting to make his objections known, sending this letter instead, when taken with the sentiments in the letter, mark him as a pacifist with Tory leanings. The letter also exposes Fairfax's wavering conviction about the proper course of action to be taken. In spite of his long, detailed plea for moderation, for petitioning without coercion or threats, and

I am precluded from saying a great deal of what I intended to mention at the first Meeting, by observing that a Petition to the King is now recommended as the first Step that ought to be taken at the Congress.

I could have wished that it had been the only Step taken by the Colonies at this time, as to give the Parliament a good Opportunity to repeal the Acts complained of would be the likeliest way to effect it. But this is not generally believed. On the contrary it is supposed that there is a regular System for enforcing the principle of Taxation. This is the very point on which our difference in opinion is founded. Those who believe in such a plan being determined on will readily approve of most of the measures proposed. Those who think with me that no such Intention plainly appears will rather postpone them to another Time. A Political opinion, as well as a religious one, is often formed by degrees. It is owing to a Train of Thoughts on the Subject of Contemplation, many of which escape the Memory so that they cannot be brought in support of one's Opinion; and this is the Reason sometimes, that of two Men of opposite Sentiments neither is able to convince the other; tho' different opinions are generally owing to a difference in Constitution &c: I will however make a few Remarks as to this point. The late Acts are thought to be a full Proof of the Parliament's Intention to enforce the Payment of Taxes. In considering this we should make an Allowances for the

for making every attempt to avoid a colonial confrontation with the British authorities, he was nevertheless willing to acquiesce in adopting the Resolves "as most of the Colonies seem determined on them, and many Counties here are also entering into them." He thought it "prudent" for Fairfax to do likewise in the interest of unanimity. The Resolves, as adopted, were the longest, most detailed, and most militant of those prepared by any Virginia county. They called for a colonial congress "to concert a general and uniform Plan for the Defense and Preservation of our common Rights," an association to prohibit and enforce nonimportation by publishing "a List of Names of those . . . who will not accede thereto: that such Traitors to their Country may be publicly known and detested," and, in language that Fairfax specifically objected to, "from our Sovereign there can be but one Appeal," threw down the gauntlet to George III. Fairfax's objections to them, as expressed in this 17 July letter, mark him as not only unsure of his own position but differing in opinion from many, or most, of the other men of substance in Fairfax County. For more on Resolves, see Netherton, Sweig, *et al.*, *Fairfax History*, 96-104, Robert A. Rutland, ed., *The Papers of George Mason, 1725-1792*, 1 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1970), 199-210.

Prejudices of others. An Englishman however clear he may be in Opinion as to the Rights of Taxation, ought to consider the Motives from which an Opposition in America arises. He ought to consider that it springs from virtuous tho' (as he may think) erroneous principles. In like Manner the Americans ought to consider the Majority of the english Parliament, or a great part, as acting from honest tho' erroneous principles. Could they, under the persuasion that they had a right to impose the Duty on Tea, avoid taking Notice of what had happened at Boston? However great their Exertion of Power has been, they might conceive themselves bound to protect their Trade, and to take some Measures similar to what they have done without a farther design to enforce the principle of Taxation. From the late Speeches it appears that some of those, who opposed the Repeal, did so, because of it's being unseasonable; and others, because they thought the Americans would be still encroaching, not because they were averse to it if a decent opportunity were given them. If this is the Case we deprive ourselves by hasty Resolutions of what we can never recover. It will be too late hereafter to petition. We must effect what we desire by compulsion. This must be the Work of years: for after what has already happened our Threats will not be hastily regarded. They must be convinced from Experience of our Perseverance; and we shall find It will require a great Exertion of Virtue for that Purpose. Whatever Corruption there may be in the Parliament, whatever unjust designs some Men may have, we ought to gain the Affections of those who mean well, we should strive to conciliate the Affections of the Nation, and make Allowance for their Prejudices. We should have an eye to the next Parliament, and avoid every measure that might justly exasperate the People. It is incredible how far a mild Behavior contributes to a Reconciliation in any dispute between Man & Man, and how much the Spectators are always engaged on the side of the Man of Moderation. It is the same in public Contentions. They who divest themselves of Resentment and seem desirous of peace, go a great Way towards obtaining it. For these Reasons I ardently wish that no Resolves had been now entered into: But as most of the Colonies seem determined on them, and many Counties here are also entering into them, perhaps

it would be prudent in this County to join also, as the Colonies ought to be unanimous. However, I hope it will be recommended, that, if a Petition should be agreed upon, and sent Home by the general Congress, No Conditional Resolutions, which may be formed at the time, should be published until it is known that the Petition has had no Effect. For we should otherwise destroy the very Intention of it. To petition and to threaten at the same time seems to be inconsistent. It might be of Service with the Ministry, if they have evil Designs, to know the Dispositions of the People here. I am sure that sufficiently appears from what has been already published. And if that appears, no Threatenings ought to accompany the Petition. It ought to be as modest as possible without descending to Meanness. There is one Expression then in one of our Resolves on this Subject, which I must object to; that is, a Hint to the King that if his Majesty will not comply, there lies but one Appeal.² This ought surely to be erased. There are two Methods proposed to effect a Repeal; the one by Petition, the other by Compulsion. They ought then to be kept separate and distinct. And we shall find few for joining them together, but what are rather against the Former.

As to the other great point of Dispute, whether we should have no Imports only, or we should debar ourselves from both Exports and Imports; If we should be forced to take some such Measures, I had rather vote for the latter as the more effectual, provided it can be done consistent with the Justice that is due to those to whom we are

²The 23rd of the Fairfax Resolves as adopted, ended by "most humbly conjuring and beseeching [sic.] his Majesty, not to reduce his faithful subjects of America to a State of desperation, and to reflect, that from our Sovereign there can be but one Appeal." The appeal was, of course, war. Mason, or whoever actually wrote the Resolves, rephrased this sentiment, that when a people are oppressed and have no other recourse they can resort to arms to protect their persons and property, from the writings of the English philosopher, John Locke (See Peter Laslett, ed., John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* [Cambridge, 1967], II, sec. 19, 20, 212, 226, 227, esp. 232 "it is lawful for the people, in some Cases to *resist* their, King. . . since they may in some Cases *resist*, all resisting of *Princes* is not Rebellion." Fairfax's strong objection to this principle is in stark contrast to that of his collateral ancestor Thomas, third Lord Fairfax, who pushed this point to the ultimate conclusion by commanding the parliamentary army in the English Civil War that not only resisted the king, but also beheaded Charles I at a public execution

indebted. If we have Exports it is to be feared that the Ships which come for those Exports will bring Imports. We cannot store those Goods without acting illegally. If we wish to avoid a Civil War we must do Nothing illegal. We must depend on our own Virtue. On the other Hand, if we have no Exports, Provisions will be very cheap and plenty. Plenty of provisions, together with a great demand for Manufactures, will invite Manufacturers in great Numbers from any Country where they happen to be cheap from too great an Abundance: Thus we may meet with some Retribution for our Sufferings, and Great Britain some Diminution for her Injustice.

I come now to consider a Resolve which ought to be the most objected to, as tending more to widen the Breach, and prevent a Reconciliation than any other. I mean that wherein the Authority of Parliament is almost in every Instance denied. Something similar to this, tho' more imprudent, is the most exceptionable part of the Conduct of some in New England. It has been asserted in the House of Commons, that the Americans have been gradually encroaching; that as they have given up points we have insisted on more. The Fact is true as to Encroachment, but the Reason assigned is wrong. It is not because they have given up Points, but because they have not given them up, that we out of Resentment demand more than we at first thought of. But however natural it is to people incensed to increase their Claims, and whatever our Anger may induce us to say; In calm deliberations we should not insist on any Thing unreasonable. We have all along submitted to the Authority of Parliament. From the first Settlement of the Colonies I believe there never was an Act of Parliament disputed 'till the famous Stamp Act. It is a maxim in Law that all Acts made since the Settlement of the Colonies do not extend here, unless the Colonies are particularly named; therefore all Acts wherein they are included do extend here. When the Stamp-Act was repealed it was said, and I did not hear it contradicted, that the Americans objected to internal Taxes, but not to external Duties³ When the Duty on Tea was laid as an external

³See Edmund S. and Helen M. Morgan *The Stamp Act Crisis* (Chapel Hill, N.C. 1953) esp 88-115, 282-291

Duty we objected to it, and with some Reason, because it was not for the regulation of Trade, but for the express purpose of raising a Revenue. This was deemed a small encroachment on our first Demands. Some now object to the Authority which has established & regulated the Post-Office, a very useful Regulation. Others deny their Authority in regard to our Internal Affairs. If we go on at this Rate it is impossible that the Troubles of America should ever have an End. Whatever we may wish to be the Case, it becomes good Subjects to submit to the Constitution of their Country. Whenever a political Establishment has been settled, it ought to be considered what that is, and not what it ought to be. To fix a contrary principle is to lay the Foundation of continual Broils & Revolutions.

The Parliament from Prescription have a Right to make Laws binding on the Colonies, except those imposing Taxes. From Prescription the Americans are exempted from Taxation. Let us stand upon good Ground in our Opposition, otherwise many upon Reflection may desert the Cause. Therefore I hope some Alteration will be made in the 2d. Resolve, or that Nothing under this Head will be mentioned.

Thus, Sir, I have made some Objections as it appeared incumbent on me to do, and hope that you will cause this Letter to be read as containing my Sentiments on this important Occasion.

I am with great Respect & Regard, Sir Yr. most obedt. Servt

BRYAN FAIRFAX

The Parliament from Prescription have a Right to make
Laws binding on the Colonies, except those improving Taxes
From Prescription the Americans are exempted from Taxation.
Let us stand upon good Grounds in our Opposition, otherwise many
upon Reflection may desert the Cause. Therefore I hope some Alteration
will be made in the 2^d Resolve, or that Nothing under this Head will
be mentioned.

Thus, Sir, I have made some Objections as it
appeared incumbent on me to do, and hope that you will cause
this Letter to be read as containing my Sentiments on this impor-
tant Occasion.

I am with great Respect & Regard,

Sir Y^r most obed^t Serv^t

 Bryan Fairfax.

July the 17th

1774.

* *Washington to Fairfax* *
[Fitzpatrick Virginia Historical Society]

Mount Vernon, July 20 1774

DEAR SIR Your letter of the 17th was not presented to me till after the resolutions, (which were adjudged advisable for this county to come to), had been revised, altered, and corrected in the committee; nor till we had gone into a general meeting in the court-house, and my attention necessarily called every moment to the business that was before it. I did, however, upon receipt of it, (in that hurry and bustle,) hastily run it over, and handed it round to the gentlemen on the bench of which there were many; but as no person present seemed in the least disposed to adopt your sentiments, as there appeared a perfect satisfaction and acquiescence in the measures proposed (except from a Mr. Williamson,¹ who was for adopting your advice literally, without obtaining a second voice on his side) and as the gentlemen, to whom the letter was shown, advised me not to have it read, as it was not like to make a convert and repugnant, (some of them thought,) to the very principle we were contending for, I forbore to offer it otherwise than in the manner above mentioned; which I shall be sorry for, if it gives you any dissatisfaction in not having your sentiments read to the county at large instead of communicating them to the first people in it, by offering them the letter in the manner I did.

That I differ very widely from you in respect to the mode of obtaining a defeat [repeal] of the acts so much and so justly complained of, I shall not hesitate to acknowledge; and that this difference in opinion may probably proceed from the different constructions we put upon the conduct and intention of the ministry may also be true; but, as I see nothing on the one hand, to induce a belief that the Parliament would embrace a favorable opportunity of repealing acts, which they go on with great rapidity to

¹Williamson is not among committee members listed in Force. *American Archives*, I 601-602

pass, and in order to enforce their tyrannical system; and, on the other, I observe, or think I observe that government is pursuing a regular plan at the expense of law and justice to overthrow our constitutional rights and liberties, how can I expect any redress from a measure, which has been ineffectually tried already? For, Sir, what is it we are contending against? Is it against paying the duty of three pence per pound of tea because burthensome? No, it is the right only, we have all along disputed, and to this end we have already petitioned his Majesty in as humble and dutiful manner as subjects could do. Nay more, we applied to the House of Lords and House of Commons in their different legislative capacities, setting forth that as Englishmen, we could not be deprived of this essential and valuable part of a constitution. If, then, as the fact really is, it is against the right of taxation that we now do, and, (as I before said,) all along have contended, why should they suppose an exertion of this power would be less obnoxious now than formerly? And what reasons have we to believe, that they would make a second attempt, while the same sentiments filled the breast of every American, if they did not intend to enforce it if possible?

The conduct of the Boston people could not justify the rigor of their measures, unless there had been a requisition of payment and refusal of it; nor did that measure require an act to deprive the government of Massachusetts Bay of their charter, or to exempt offenders from trial in the place where offences were committed, as there was not, nor could not be, a single instance produced to manifest the necessity of it. Are not all these things self evident proofs of a fixed and uniform plan to tax us? If we want further proofs, do not all the debates in the Huse [*sic*] of Commons serve to confirm this? And has not General Gage's conduct since his arrival, (in stopping the address of his Council, and publishing a proclamation more becoming a Turkish bashaw, than an English governor, declaring it treason to associate in any manner by which the commerce of Great Britain is to be affected,) exhibited an unexampled testimony of the most despotic system of tyranny, that ever was practised in a free government? In short, what further proofs are

wanted to satisfy one of the designs of the ministry, than their own acts, which are uniform and plainly tending to the same point, nay, if I mistake not, avowedly to fix the right of taxation? What hope then from petitioning, when they tell us, that now or never is the time to fix the matter? Shall we, after this, whine and cry for relief, when we have already tried it in vain? Or shall we supinely sit and see one province after another fall a prey to despotism? If I was in any doubt, as to the right which the Parliament of Great Britain had to tax us without our consent, I should most heartily coincide with you in opinion, that to petition, and petition only, is the proper method to apply for relief; because we should then be asking a favor, and not claiming a right, which, by the law of nature and our constitution, we are, in my opinion, indubitably entitled to. I should even think it criminal to go further than this, under such an idea; but none such I have. I think the Parliament of Great Britain hath no more right to put their hands into my pocket, without my consent, than I have to put my hands into yours for money; and this being already urged to them in a firm, but decent manner, by all the colonies, what reason is there to expect any thing from their justice?

As to the resolution for addressing the throne, I own to you, Sir I think the whole might as well have been expunged. I expect nothing from the measure, nor should my voice have accompanied it, if the non-importation scheme was intended to be retarded by it; or I am convinced, as much as I am of my existence, that there is no relief but in their distress; and I think, at least I hope, that there is public virtue enough left among us to deny ourselves every thing but the bare necessities of life to accomplish this end. This we have a right to do, and no power upon earth can compel us to do otherwise, till they have first reduced us to the most abject state of slavery that ever was designed for mankind. The stopping our exports would, no doubt, be a shorter cut than the other to effect this purpose; but if we owe money to Great Britain, nothing but the last necessity can justify the non-payment of it; and, therefore, I have great doubts upon this head, and wish to see the other method first tried, which is legal and will facilitate these payments.

I cannot conclude without expressing some concern, that I should differ so widely in sentiment from you, in a matter of such great moment and general import; and should much distrust my own judgment upon the occasion, if my nature did not recoil at the thought of submitting to measures, which I think subversive of every thing that I ought to hold dear and valuable, and did I not find at the same time, that the voice of mankind is with me

I must apologize for sending you so rough a sketch of my thoughts upon your letter. When I looked back, and saw the length of my own, I could not, as I am also a good deal hurried at this time bear the thoughts of making off a fair copy. I am, &c.

[GO WASHINGTON]

* Fairfax to Washington *
[Hamilton DLC]

Towlston August the 5th 1774.

DEAR SIR.

I received your Favour of the 20th of July, and must own that I thought it odd at first that my Letter was not read till I considered that I had no Right to have it done, as every one who chose it ought to have been present, and till I perceived by your Letter that the Committee were against it. If there had been no Reason for refusing it but a Persuasion that the Sentiments contained it [*sic*, in?] it were erroneous I don't think it would have been a just one. I am satisfied with your Reasons as I had no Desire to make a Party or oppose my opinion to that of a large Majority; I sent it down, as I could not go in person without great Inconvenience, that I might not hereafter reproach myself with being silent on the Occasion. However I am inclined, since the Receipt of yours, to think I am mistaken about the

Plan determined on at Home You have no Reason Sir to doubt your opinion; It is I that have Reason to doubt mine when so many Men of superior Understanding think otherwise It has in Fact caused me to examine it again & again, but if I was not convinced of an Error, it appeared to me that it shewed as much Cowardice in a Man not to maintain his opinions when real as Obstinacy to persevere in them contrary to Conviction. Mr. Williamson told me the other day that he found afterwards that there were a great many of his opinion in the Court House who did not care to speak because they thought it would be to no Purpose; and it may be so, because a Person, present when he was telling me so, said he was at the Meeting and did secretly object to some of the Resolves but could not speak his Mind. That You may not think my Sentiments quite so singular as they appeared to be.. I must observe, that the second Person's Opinion I heard after the Arrival of the Boston Port Bill was Mr. Dalton's¹, who asked me what I thought of it; whether I did not think that the Parliament were bound to do what they did or something like it to secure the Trade of their Merchants? If the same outrage had been committed in any foreign Port whether the Government could have acquiesced without demanding and enforcing Restitution? or something to this Purpose And it really appeared to me then a distinct Thing from enforcing the Payment of the Duty. The next Person whose opinion I heard was Mr. Williamson's; and the next Mr. Henderson's², with this difference, that the Bostonians ought to have destroyed the Tea, but should have sent home the Payment for it immediately But that the Government could not avoid taking the Steps &c. He joined with me in opinion that the People at Boston were blameable in their Behavior in other Respects; And when I expressed my Concern at the Bill then talked of for altering their Charter, he observed that the Measure might be necessary considering the factious Conduct of the people; They have all along appeared to me to shew a different Spirit from the Rest of the Colonies; and if ever we have a civil War I think without some Check they will be at the head of it, and I can't conceive of

¹John Dalton: Alexandria merchant and committee member

²Alexander Henderson: merchant and committee member

any thing Worse for America at present I know not whether Mr. Henderson told me this in Confidence or not: In case He should I beg that You won't mention his opinion, altho' he don't reserve this Caution. By mentioning the word Check, I don't mean to approve of All or scarce one of the Measures lately exercised on N: England A Charter should not be altered without the Consent or consulting with the Majority of the people, or upon some very flagrant or violent Occasions wherein the good of the whole is endangered But even the consent of the whole ought to be obtained No Constitution as I mentioned in my Letter should be altered unless the Consent of every part concerned can be had We have no right to alter our Constitution without the Consent of the King & Parliament. For the same Reason none of our Constitutions should be altered without our Consent. For the Parliament according to the opinion of good Civilians have no Right to alter the Constitution of England, without taking or obtaining a Sanction from the Voice of the People if it could be had, because the Constitution is fixed when the people's Representatives are chosen And therefore they must Act according to it and can't alter it. It may possibly be for the good of the Colony of Massachusetts to alter the Constitution Governor Hutchinson³ a Native and a Man of good Character advised it, it is true, but he may have too arbitrary Notions. As the People who first went to settle chose such a Form of Government and obtained it, they ought to be the best Judges of the Conveniencies or Inconveniencies attending it I wish our's was altered with respect to the Council: but it is dangerous meddling in such Matters; it might be a bad precedent in troublesome times And as to ye [the] Act for transporting Criminals to England for Trial⁴ tho' I wish every man could obtain strict Justice, and that no man in civil Disputes should be tried till the Passions of Men have a little subsided I dislike it as much as any Man; But in regard to the Boston Port Bill I own I have no objection to it except to the Power given to the Crown of shutting up the Port after the Tea may be paid for. I can see no Difference between demanding Satisfaction first, and sending a Fleet to demand it with conditional

³Thomas Hutchinson, governor of Massachusetts

⁴*Administration of Justice Act*

orders to block up the Port upon Refusal, or till Satisfaction is made. I own too that I have been inclined to think that the Tea ought to have been paid for before the other Colonies had joined in Support of Boston; but I suppose I am wrong as so many others think otherwise. However, upon this occasion I can't held mentioning, that at a very full Meeting of Gentlemen at York relating to the Middlesex Election there were only two, one a namesake of mine, who dissented from the whole Assembly; consequently their opinions were very unpopular. And yet I have lived [to] see some coming over to their opinion and as strongly of their opinion; two of them at least, Mr. Harrison and Mr. Grayson, as ever they were of a contrary one. This Example (if this Assembly were mistaken) would serve to shew, if there were not Many Instances in History where large Bodies of Men have been mistaken, that a Man, however doubtful he may become when he perceived a great Number to think otherwise, ought not to be too hasty in giving up his opinion.

I have been uneasy to find, that any one should look upon the Letter sent down as repugnant to the principle we were contending for, and therefore when You have leisure I shall take it as a Favor if you will let me know wherein it was thought so. I must make an Apology for these long Letters which I trouble you with. I have scarce passed a day without anxious thoughts upon the Subject. I beg leave to look upon you as a Friend and it is a great Relief to unbosom ones thoughts to a Friend; besides, the Information and Correction to my Errors I may obtain from a Correspondence is a great Inducement to it; For I am convinced that no Man in the Colony wishes it's Prosperity more, would go Greater Lengths to serve it, nor is at the same time a better Subject to the Crown. Pray excuse these Compliments—They may be tolerable in a Friend.

I can't recollect any Expression that could give any Reason for the Supposition just mentioned. As to Taxes I was never of opinion that the Parliament had a Right to impose them, and hardly ever had a Doubt upon the Subject of their taking our Money from us without our Consent; Tho' as to the Duty on Tea I never was so clear in opinion as to sign any Paper in Opposition to the Right; but as it is certainly unjust, I may refuse to trade with a Nation exercising that

Injustice even if the Right was ever so clear. But I don't remember that I mentioned any doubt upon the Subject. Since I got so far I have been reading King James's Charters to the first Virginia Companies at the End of Stith's History; there is one Expression in the 2d: Charter a Little different from the Quotation of it which I have in the House, and which I can't understand perfectly, at least without considering a subsequent Clause. Sect. 19. And for their further Encouragement, of our special Grace and Favour, we do, by these presents, for Us, our Heirs & Successors, Yield and Grant, to and with the said Treasurer and Company, and their Successors, and every of them, their Factors and Assigns, that they and every of them shall be free of all Subsidies and Customs in Virginia, for the Space of one & twenty years, and from all Taxes and Impositions, for ever, (here the Quotation stops) upon any Goods or Merchandises, at any time or times hereafter, either upon Importation thither, or exportation from thence, into to our Realm of England, or into any other of our Realms or Dominions, by the said Treasurers and Company, and their Successors &c: Except only the five pounds per Cent due for Custom, upon all such Goods and Merchandises, as shall be brought or imported into our Realm of England, or any other of these our Dominions according to the ancient Trade of Merchants; &c In the 21st. Sect. are these words (after directing what duties Strangers and foreigners are to pay over & their Successors, is, or hereafter shall be, to pay) And the same Sums of Money and Benefit as aforesaid for and during the Space of one and twenty years shall be wholly employed to the Benefit, Use, and Behoof of the said Colony and Plantation; And after the said one and twenty years ended, the same shall be taken to the use of Us, our heirs and Successors, by such Officers and Ministers, as by us our heirs and Successors, shall be thereunto assigned and appointed, as is specified in the said former Letters Patents.

I shall be glad of your opinion upon this. If you would read over all the Charters anew some Thoughts might occur on both sides of the Question. The distinction that was made some years ago in the Colonies between the Right to impose Duties for the Regulation of Trade which has been allowed, and the Right to impose Duties for raising a Revenue I don't understand so well as I wish to do, tho' I

can see a great difference between the propriety or Justice in laying a small Duty or Duties for the former purpose, and a declared, or apparent Intention to raise a considerable Revenue by degrees.

There is a new opinion now lately advanced in Virginia that the Parliament have no right to make any or scarce any Laws binding on the Colonies. It has given me much Uneasiness. For altho' I wish as much as any one that we were legally exempted from it, yet I hold it clearly that we ought to abide by our Constitution. The common Consent and Acquiescence in the Colonies for such a Length of time is to me a clear Proof of their having a Right. And altho' it is said that it has only been exercised in Matters of Trade, it will be found to be a Mistake. The Act for the Alternation of the Style was unquestionably received and assented to—The Act for the Regulation of the Post-Office, I mean the first Act: the Act empowering Officers to enlist Servants just imported, and to pay the Owners for them; The Acts relating to the Provincial Troops the last War &c have no Relation to Trade; but they were enacted when the Acts of any single Assembly could not have answered the End. And upon these occasions they have been passed without the least Objection that ever I heard to the contrary. When I first heard the Subject of Taxation mentioned, a Tax was talked of to be laid by Parliament on the Lands in America. Colo. Mason who was present spoke as much as usual upon the Subject, upon the Impropriety I believe of taxing Infant Colonies, and the nature or excessiveness of it compared to the value of Lands &c. but I did not hear him make one Objection as to the Right of Parliament. When I came afterwards to hear the Right called in Question I recollected the Conversation, and was surprised that I had not heard a Man of his understanding and readiness to find fault with every thing irregular, take Notice of it; And Tho' he may not have considered the Matter as a new point, yet it is a proof that the Idea of the Parliament having no Right to make any Laws for us had not ever entered into his Mind before. I saw Colo. Richard Henry Lee act as a Justice of the peace under the Act relating to Servants, and insist upon the Right he had to act on Shipboard because the Act of Parliament had given power to all Justices in America to act without

confining them to their respective Counties I have often heard mention made of uniting some of the Colonies by Act of Parliament, of some in Pennsylvania having thought of petitioning to have their Charter abrogated and a new Government formed And all this without any Objection to the Right; which looks to me like a common Consent. But I am almost Unwilling to advance any Opinion now. I shou'd not, but in hopes that you will give me yours upon this Point

By the first Charter granted to Virginia, the Council were to govern the Colony according to such Laws Ordinances and Instructions as they were to receive from the Crown. By the second Charter they were to be governed by such Laws Orders &c as should be made by the Council for the Colony appointed in & to reside in London; who were to make ordain and establish all Manner of Laws, Orders, Directions, Instructions, forms and Ceremonies of Governmt. and Magistracy, fit and necessary for the said Colony; and the first government was annulled. Pursuant to these Charters and the third the Council and Company in England made an Ordinance for holding an Assembly in Virginia, with power to make Laws, in the year 1721—with a proviso that no Law made was to be in force till it had obtained their Assent at Home

When I have considered these Disputes I have often wished to know the Sentiments of the first Settlers here. In Capt. Smith's History there is mention of Taxes by the Parliament, and some one in Virginia, makes the same Objections to it as we do at this day. Much about the same time I perceive that the Assembly had petitioned the Parliament for Relief; they thought themselves ill used by the King—I am mistaken in saying that the Assembly petitioned. It was the Company at Home, petitioned, being encouraged it is said by the Parliament having taken the Case of the Plantation Tobacco in Consideration. The Assembly petitioned the King to continue and even farther to confirm the Government under which they then lived. But if the Government must be altered they desired &c and in their Letter to the Lords of the Council they expressed a Desire that the Governors sent over might not have absolute Authority, but might be restrained to the Consent of the

Council; and that they might still retain the liberty of their general Assemblies. This was the Style & Situation of our Ancestors in the Infancy of the Colony. The English Government was a long time arriving to Maturity also. I don't think the Constitution was properly settled till the Revolution. And then immediately were sown the Seeds of its Ruin. The Parliament then first began to borrow Money and consume in one year the amount of some year's Taxes. And within ten or twelve years Corruption was introduced in order to keep out the Tory Interest. I am very sorry we happen to differ in opinion. I hope however that our Sentiments will again coincide as in other Matters: I wish they could with regard to Storing the Goods. Perhaps it is only intended as a Threat to the Merchants. But if it is otherwise, and they should send any over, I am afraid that we shjould lie at the Mercy or Generosity of those Merchants whether they will apply to [the] Government for Troops to release those Goods or not. If the End could be answered otherwise it would be better. If there was Virtue enough in the Country to abstain from only half the Goods commonly consumed it might probably answer in a few years. If every man of Influence would encourage his Neighbour to persevere perhaps we might hold out; especially if the Names of those Merchants should be published who sell or import contrary to the Desire of the general Sense of the Country: As it might prevent others from doing the like. I am sorry to hear what you Mention of General Gage.⁵ I did not imagine he had been so weak as to call Resolutions not to trade with Great Britain by the name of Treason.

I must again apologize for this Letter, hoping You'l excuse it and believe that I am with great Regard. Dear Sir Your most obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

⁵Thomas Gage, formerly in charge of British troops in Boston, was made governor of Massachusetts in early 1774.

* *Washington to Fairfax* *

[Fitzpatrick, Virginia Historical Society]

Mount Vernon August 24, 1774

DEAR SIR

Your letter of the 5th instant came to this place, forwarded by Mr Ramsay, a few days after my return from Williamsburg and I delayed acknowledging it sooner, in the hopes that I should find time, before I began my other journey to Philadelphia, to answer it fully, if not satisfactorily; but, as much of my time has been engrossed since I came home by company, by your brother's sale and the business consequent thereupon in writing letters to England, and now in attending to my own domestic affairs previous to my departure as above, I find it impossible to bestow so much time and attention to the subject matter of your letter as I could wish to do, and therefore must rely upon your good nature and candor in excuse for not attempting it. In truth, persuaded as I am, that you have read all the political pieces, which compose a large share of the *Gazette* at this time, I should think it, but for your request, a piece of inexcusable arrogance in me, to make the least essay towards a change in your political opinions; for I am sure I have no new lights to throw upon the subject, or any other arguments to offer in support of my own doctrine, than what you have seen, and could only in general add, that an innate spirit of freedom first told me that the measures, which administration hath for some time been, and now are most violently pursuing, are repugnant to every principle of natural justice, whilst much abler heads than my own hath fully convinced me that it is not only repugnant to natural right but subversive of the laws and constitution of Great Britain itself, in the establish-

¹George William Fairfax and his wife left Belvoir to return to England in 1773. The furnishings were sold at auction on 15 August 1774. Washington and several of his friends attended the sale. See advertisement for sale of furnishings and rental of Belvoir, *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon) 2 June 1774 and facs in Twohig eds. *Diaries of George Washington* III 269, 15 August 1774.

ment of which some of the best blood in the kingdom hath been spilt. Satisfied, then, that the acts of a British Parliament are no longer governed by the principles of justice, that it is trampling upon the valuable rights of Americans, confirmed to them by charter and the constitution they themselves boast of, and convinced beyond the smallest doubt, that these measures are the result of deliberation, and attempted to be carried into execution by the hand of power, is it a time to trifle, or risk our cause upon petitions, which with difficulty obtain access, and afterwards are thrown by with the utmost contempt? Or should we, because heretofore unsuspecting of design, and then unwilling to enter into disputes with the mother country, go on to bear more, and forbear to enumerate our just causes of complaint? For my own part, I shall not undertake to say where the line between Great Britain and the colonies should be drawn; but I am clearly of opinion, that one ought to be drawn, and our rights clearly ascertained. I could wish, I own, that the dispute had been left to posterity to determine, but the crisis is arrived when we must assert our rights, or submit to every imposition, that can be heaped upon us, till custom and use shall make us as tame and abject slaves, as the blacks we rule over with such arbitrary sway.²

I intended to have wrote no more than an apology for not writing; but I find I am insensibly running into a length I did not expect, and therefore shall conclude with remarking, that, if you disavow the right of Parliament to tax us, (unrepresented as we are,) we only differ in respect to the mode of opposition, and this difference principally arises from your belief, that they—the Parliament, I mean,—want a decent opportunity to repeal the acts; whilst I am as fully convinced, as I am of my own existence, that there has been a regular, systematic plan formed to enforce them, and that nothing but unanimity in the colonies (a stroke they did not expect) and firmness, can prevent it. It seems from the best advices from Boston,

²In this often quoted phrase, Washington demonstrates an understanding that race and enslavement are not necessary corollaries to one another, that custom will cause men to accept nearly any status, and that the exercise of absolute power carried with it an unflattering mantle of arrogance.

that General Gage is exceedingly disconcerted at the quiet and steady conduct of the people of the Massachusetts Bay, and at the measures pursuing by the other governments, as I dare say he expected to have forced those oppressed people into compliance or irritated them to acts of violence before this, for a more colorable pretense of ruling that and the other colonies with a high hand. But I am done.

I shall set off on Wednesday next for Philadelphia, whither if you have any commands, I shall be glad to oblige you in them; being, dear Sir with real regard, &c

[GO WASHINGTON]

P.S. Pray what do you think of the Canada Bill?³

** Fairfax to Washington **
[Hamilton, DLC]

Towlstow, Octor the 27th 1774

DEAR SIR

I have disposed of the Kittocktan Tract to Mr Threlkeld for something more than you mentioned; but I would not have done it for £50 more if I had thought You wanted it and was not in immediate Want of Money

I shall be glad to know what Sort of Money You would choose to receive and at what Rates and when You sett off to Williamsburg that if possible I may wait on You in Time.

Our Compliments to Mrs Washington & Mr & Mrs. Custis I am Dear Sir Yr most obedt Servt

BRYAN FAIRFAX

³The *Quebec Act*, 22 June 1774 provided for religious toleration for Roman Catholics within the province of Quebec

III

The War Years

1777-1783

** Fairfax to Washington **
[DLC]

From Colo[nel] Thompson's at the
Conestogo Waggon about 18 Miles below
Lancaster [Pennsylvania 21 September 1777]

DEAR SIR

I am very sorry to disturb Your Excellency at this time with a Letter upon private Business; but when I set out from Home I did not expect it would have been so difficult to get to Camp as I have found it, having rode round a great ways & being still at some distance from it.¹

Your Excellency knows that I have had the Misfortune to differ in Opinion from many of my Countrymen and I am sure have more

¹ Fairfax was on his way from Towlston to New York, then under British occupation, in hopes of getting a ship to England, but could not get through the lines of the American army. He was eventually put in jail for a few days (Fairfax to Washington, 25 Sept.). Washington responded with two passes (24 Sept. - 25 Sept.) and Fairfax did eventually get to New York, but not to England. He returned to Fairfax and sat out the war at Towlston.

Generosity than to be displeased with any Man merely for his Sentiments, & therefore freely lay my Case before You still hoping for a Continuance of Your former Friendship. For two years past I have had a stronger Desire to enter into Holy Orders than ever I had before, tho' frequently in my Life have had the same, yet generally suffered worldly considerations to interfere. This Desire and the not finding myself at Liberty to concur in the Public measures make me very anxious to get to England, and I have been in Hopes of obtaining a Pass from the Congress to go to N: York for that Purpose. There has appeared to me but one Objection, and that is: the giving Intelligence, but I would not only enter into Engagements in that respect if required but it may [be] considered that what I might say would be of little Consequence, but if of any it would rather be in Favour of America because I really think that it would be the Interest of Great Britain to let her enjoy her Independence, for if successful in this Struggle which is very doubtful it might all be to do over again at another Time.

I intended to have seen Your Excellency before I left the warm Springs the last of August where were Colo. Lewis, Your Brother & Mr. Washington² and to have brought my son Tommy with me. when I came home I found they had put him on the Militia Roll and draughted him tho' under the Age required and therefore I had him excused. He is now with me, and I intended to have taken him with me, choosing to superintend his Education.

Now Having explained the Case I earnestly intreat Your Excellency's Consideration with regard to those of Scrupulous Minds. By our own Consciences we must stand or fall and I wish & strive to die with a clear one—Not but what I believe & am persuaded that it is the same with Your Excellency and many others. I hope you will befriend me in this Matter. And if Your Excellency can give me a Pass that I might come & see You I shall be very glad to do it whether I succeed in the other matter or not for You are often in my mind & I

²Fielding Lewis was married to Washington's sister Betty. "Your Brother" could have been any of George's three male siblings: Charles, Samuel, or John Augustine; "Mr. Washington" was probably George's cousin Lund

have often sympathised with Yr Ex in regard to the great & labourious Undertaking You are engaged in

Col. Lewis bought two Lots for Yr Excellency at the Place you desired and as I was appointed to receive the Money by the Trustees and as I expected to see Yr Excellency Col Lewis referred me to You Thinking that I might find it difficult to pass to the Camp and being fatigued I have tryed to get a Messenger to carry this Letter, hoping he may [be] detained till a little leisure may be obtained if possible that I might be favoured with a Line

I remain with great Respect & Regard Yr Excellency's most obedt & obliged h^tSt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

** Washington to Fairfax **
[Virginia Historical Society]

Camp near Pottsgrove [Pennsylvania] Septr 24th 1777

DEAR SIR

Your favor from the Connistoga Waggon without date was put into my hands on the Evening of the 21st Inst by a stranger who said he was going to Phila. and would call upon me as he returned but have seen nothing of him since.

The difference in our political Sentiments never made any change in my friendship for you, and the favorable Sentiments I ever entertain'd of your Honr. leaves me without a doubt that you would say any thing, or do any thing injurious to the cause we are ingaged in, after having pledg'd your word to the contrary I therefore give my consent readily, to the prosecution of your Inclination of going to England, and for this purpose Inclose a certificate—or pass-port to come forward to this Army whenever you please

My extreme hurry will not allow me time to add more than that I am Dr. Sir Yr. Most Obedt. & Affec.

GO: WASHINGTON

[Passport Attached]

Permit the bearer, Bryan Fairfax Esqr. to pass to and from the Army of the United States with out let or hindrance. Given under my hand the 24th. day of Sept. 1777

GO: WASHINGTON

** Washington to Fairfax **
[VMHB, Collections of Lord Fairfax]

Camp near Pottsgrove [Pennsylvania] Septr. 25th. 1777

DEAR SIR,

Despairing of seeing the bearer again, I wrote an answer to your favour from the Conestoga Waggon (without date) yesterday, and put it into the hands of a man who faithfully promised to deliver it—since wch. your own Messenger has called upon me, & that you may have two chances of getting my passport to the Camp, you will receive one under this cover.

In my Letter of yesterday I assur'd you, and assur'd you with truth, that the difference in our political Sentiments had made no change in my friendship for you. I esteem, and revere, every Man who acts from principle as I am perswaded you do; and shall ever contribute my aid to facilitate any Inclination you may wish to indulge, as I am satisfied that the honr. which I have ever found you scrupulously

observant of, will never be departed from. I shall add no more, because in the first place, I have very little leizure, & in the next, because I conceive it unnecessary to multiply words to prove that with sincere regard I am Dr Sir Yr Most Obedt. & affe

GO WASHINGTON

** Fairfax to Washington **
[DLC]

Lancaster [Pennsylvania] Septr the 25th 1777

DEAR SIR

Your Excellency's Kindness hath increased my Gratitude for your many Favours and I hope it will last always, & that no Distañce of Time or Place will efface the Remembrance thereof from my Mind.

The Letter, which I gave to an Officer of Militia who was going down & who said he would try to get a Man to wait for Yr Excellency's Answer, was written & sent off the 21st But my staying two or three days in the Neighbourhood not withstanding Colo. Thompson's knowing of my sending down, gave a Suspicion to some of the People thereabouts, & has been the Cause of my being sent up here to Goal which tho' it gave me a little Uneasiness at first I thank God I have been able to bear it with good Spirits, having been civilly treated by all thru' whom I passed except one but I think I have more Charity & Love to him than Ill will; so that God can make any State agreeable to us when he pleases I had the Pleasure this Afternoon of seeing Colo. Richard Henry Lee & his Brother and thru' their good Offices by what I hear to Night I expect to be released to Morrow and shall do myself the Pleasure of waiting on Your Excellency if my Return to Virginia be not required by those who may release me | Before I left Home I made Provision that the Rents of the Springfield

Tract should be paid to Mr. Custis¹—I sent him £30 in July in a Letter to be forwarded by Mr. Muir², but I afterwards heard that he was in the lower Parts. I had some Money with me for my Brother and intended to have consulted with Your Excellency what to do with it. I did not think proper to bring it into such a Place as this.

I forgot to mention that Mrs. Lewis³ was also at Bath and yt. [that] Colo. Lewis was mending fast as usual after his Arrival.

I remain with great Respect & Regard Yr. Excellency's most obliged h. st.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

At my Lodgings near Camp Octo. the 1: 1777

DEAR SIR,

Tho' I have so lately taken Leave it seems to be some Alleviation of my Concern to leave a few Lines for Yr. Excellency to be put in your Pocket and read at Leisure⁴.

Your Kindness hath affected me so that I feel more Uneasiness at Part.[in]g than I expected. What You mentioned lately in Conversation hath also revived very tender Ideas concerning those I have left behind, esepcially with regard to one who deserves every Regard. It is a hard Necessity just at this time to be forced to a disagreeable alternative. I seemed to have been impelled by one Reason follow-

¹John Parke Custis, Washington's stepson by his wife's first marriage.

²John Muir, Alexandria merchant.

³Washington's sister Betty, wife of Fielding Lewis.

⁴Fairfax used the pass provided by Washington to pay the general a visit (see letters 21, 24, 25 Sept.).

ing another till I had no Rest in my mind in staying. The Event will more Clearly determine the Propriety of my Conduct

I am Yr. Excellency's most obliged & affect. hbleSt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

** Fairfax to Washington **

[DLC]

Towlston December the 8th. 1777

DEAR SIR

Now that the Winter Season will put a Stop to the Operations of War, and Yr. Excellency will probably have a little more Leisure than usual I sit down to write to You, and tho' I have Nothing to communicate worthy your Notice, yet if it be only to renew my Thanks for your late Kindness, and to keep up Your Remembrance of Me it may not be improper—but yet I ought not to do it so as to give You the Trouble of writing again, and therefore I do not, and ought not expect it For it is almost impossible for a Person of any Feeling not to wish to avoid giving You any additional Trouble so that I hope you will just receive this as a small Tribute of Gratitude There are Times when Favours conferred make a greater Impression than at others for tho' I have received many, and hope I have not been unmindful of them, yet that, at a Time your Popularity was at the highest and mine at the lowest, & when it is so common for Men's Resentments to run high agst those that differ from them in Opinion You should act with your wanted Kindness towards me, hath affected me more than any Favour I have received; and could not be believed by some in N. York it being above the Run of common Minds. It hath given me much Regret since, that when I had so good an Opportunity I did not act more the Part of a Friend than I did, notwithstanding what little I

did say was a Prejudice to me. But I was confused my words were sometimes misunderstood, and when I endeavoured to explain them was charged with denying what I had said. Had I shewed more Resentment it would have been better for me; but I am always slow in judging what is proper to be said. There was such an unreasonable Prejudice suddenly raised when I hesitated about taking some Oaths, not knowing whether it might not for ever deprive me of seeing my Wife & children again to do so just at this Juncture, and was so overborne by two or three interrupting me and apparently confusing me that I concluded it was the Will of God I should not stay there, and therefore became resigned tho' with Reluctance. It was a little odd that it should not come into my Mind to use such Proofs as would certainly have sati[s]fied any reasonable Persons all Circumstances taken together. I made a Scruple of Shewing one of Your Last Letters to Major Campbell when I returned to Staten Island only on Accot. of the place it was dated from, when he was not altogether satisfied with my telling him the Contents only.¹ His civility was a Contrast to the Behavior of others; and when he put me in a Way of returning from E. Town, I was afterwards treated more roughly than ever, and thrown into Terrors of Mind, as if Providence designed that I should not hesitate on what was proposed to me. And this also caused me not to think of going to Philadelphia, which they advised me to on quitting N. York. It was at my Tongues End once or twice in the Conference You favoured me with to mention Phila: as I had some small Knowledge of Lord Howe² but was checked by thinking it a less reasonable Reasonable [sic] Request because Tommy was with me, and also that N: York would be more quiet. There is an overruling Providence in points we sometimes little dream of. It is certainly one's Duty to take Care of one's Family, and amidst all the Impulses to go on (among others I had some

¹Major Campbell was apparently a British officer, as they were holding Staten Island. Fairfax did not wish to show him the letter from Washington, lest the British gain intelligence from knowing Washington's exact whereabouts.

²Lord Richard Howe was in charge of a royal commission sent to attempt to conciliate the colonists. As Fairfax's intent was to mediate an end to the war with Britain, it apparently occurred to him and to the British at New York that he should try to contact Howe

small Hope of contributing something towards a Peace, as I believed both Parties misunderstood each other) that Duty would arise as a Check, notwithstanding on Accot of these Troubles woman & children suffer the least who are at any distance from the Seat of War. It is distressing to those who would concur if they could find themselves at Liberty so to do. Romans XIV. I went twice to Your Assistance last War, and had much rather do it again if I could than suffer the Uneasiness I have done. It is a great Misfortune for a Man who had rather agree with any one than differ from him, to differ from his Friends and Acquaintance and to be lightly esteemed therefor, even supposing his Faith in God to be so strong as not to fear any personal Insults; but when his Faith is weak, as it will be sometimes, it is very distressg.

That You should befriend me at such a Time dejected as I was by a long Train of inward Trials was highly acceptable. I can only pray for You, and tho' I had sometimes done so, yet I own not half so often as I have done since; and I think God will bless You for favouring them that serve him.

I hope You will not look upon any Thing I've written as Flattery, and believe You know me better than to suspect it, as I believe No Man is better acquainted with You than I am, and the Regard I have always had has followed necessarily in Consequence of that Knowledge. And I always thought it allowable from one Friend to another to give vent to their real Sentiments—for by whom can a Man be told of his Virtues with Propriety but by his Friends, when they are so established that no Injury can result from it. Perhaps I may be wrong, tho' Mr. Nicholas is the only Person that every I gave a Loose to my Thoughts to in that manner besides.

I have no Opportunity at present to inform You of any of Your particular Friends but suppose they are well. Mr. Warner Washington & my Sister were at Mt. Vernon in October, he very ill of the Gout. I remain Dr: Sir, Yr. Excellency's affect. & obliged hble Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

* *Washington to Fairfax* *
[Fitzpatrick, DLC]

Valley forge, March 1, 1778.

DEAR SIR:

Your favor of the 8th. of Decr. came safe to my hands after a considerable delay in its passage. The sentiments you have expressed of me in this Letter are highly flattering, meriting my warmest acknowledgements, as I have too good an Opinion of your sincerity and candour to believe that you are capable of unmeaning professions and speaking a language foreign from your Heart. The friendship I ever professed, and felt for you, met with no diminution from the difference in our political Sentiments. I know the rectitude of my own intentions, and believing in the sincerity of yours, lamented, though I did not condemn, your renunciation of the creed I had adopted. Nor do I think any person, or power, ought to do it, whilst your conduct is not opposed to the general Interest of the people and the measures they are pursuing; the latter, that is our actions, depending upon ourselves, may be controuled, while the powers of thinking originating in higher causes, cannot always be moulded to our wishes.

The determinations of Providence are all ways wise; often inscrutable, and though its decrees appear to bear hard upon us at times is nevertheless meant for gracious purposes; in this light I cannot help viewing your late disappointment; for if you had been permitted to have gone to england, unrestrained even by the rigid oaths which are administred on those occns. your feelings as a husband, Parent, &ca. must have been considerably wounded in the prospect of a long, perhaps lasting seperation from your nearest relatives. What then must they have been if the obligation of an oath had left you without a Will? Your hope of being instrumental in restoring Peace would prove as unsubstantial as mist before the Noon days Sun and would as soon dispel: for believe me Sir great Britain understood

herself perfectly well in this dispute but did not comprehend America. She meant as Lord Campden in his late speech in Parlt. clearly, and explicitly declared, to drive America into rebellion that her own purposes might be more fully answered by it but take this along with it, that this Plan originating in a firm belief, founded on misinformation, that no effectual opposition would or could be made, they little dreamt of what has happened and are disappointed. in their views; does not every act of administration from the Tea Act to the present Session of Parliament declare this in plain and self evident Characters? Had the Commissioners any power to treat with America? If they meant Peace, would Lord Howe have been detained in England 5 Months after passing the Act? Would the powers of these Comrs. have been confined to mere acts of grace, upon condition of absolute submission? No, surely, No! they meant to drive us into what they termed rebellion, that they might be furnished with a pretext to disarm and then strip us of the rights and privileges of Englishmen and Citizens. If they were actuated by principles of justice, why did they refuse indignantly to accede to the terms which were humbly supplicated before hostilities commenced and this County deluged in Blood; and now make their principal Officers and even the Comrs themselves say, that these terms are just and reasonable; Nay that more will be granted than we have yet asked, if we will relinquish our Claim to Independency. What Name does such conduct as this deserve? and what punishment is there in store for the Men who have distressed Millions, involved thousands in ruin, and plunged numberless families in inextricable woe? Could that wch. is just and reasonable now, have been unjust four Years ago? If not upon what principles, I say does Administration act? they must either be wantonly wicked and cruel, or (which is only another mode of describing the same thing) under false colours are now endeavouring to deceive the great body of the people, by industriously propagating a

The Howe Commission was empowered to issue pardons and restore civil government in return for the disbanding of all colonial armies and extralegal assemblies (continental congresses and state conventions) and the taking of oaths of allegiance to the crown. They were not, as Washington noted, empowered to treat or negotiate with the colonists on the basic issue of colonial grievance.

belief that G.B. is willing to offer any, and that we will accept of no terms; thereby hoping to poison and dissaffect the Minds of those who wish for peace, and create feuds and dissensions among ourselves. In a word, having less dependance now, in their Arms than their Arts, they are practising such low and dirty tricks, that Men of Sentiments and honr. must blush at their Villainy, among other manoeuvres, in this way they are counterfeiting Letters, and publishing them, as intercepted ones of mine to prove that I am an enemy to the present measures, and have been led into them step by step still hoping that Congress would recede from their present claims. I am, etc.

[GO: WASHINGTON]

** Fairfax to Washington **
[DLC]

Alexandria March the 29, 1778

DEAR SIR

I had the Pleasure of writing to Your Excellency some time in the last Winter, and tho' I then did not expect to hear from You, yet upon this occasion I hope to be favoured with a Line—Mr. Custis is willing to receive what I owe him at the rate of 33 1/3 Exchange, w|hi|ch appears to me so much to his disadvantage considering the price of everything at present, that while I was getting the money which I expect every month, I thought it proper to have Your opinion on it—I am very sensible that it was thro' your kindness that I rece|ive|d & had the Use of the Money and do not choose that Mr. Custis should be a Loser by it. I should think it more equitable to make up in some measure the difference without mentioning the Exchange w|hi|ch I

was thinking of proposing had I received the money I lately expected.

I have just received (since I began this) Yr. kind Favour of the 1st March, but must postpone writing more fuller till another opportunity, for it hath pleased God to take from us our daughter Sally—she died here this morning—as you observe what must I have felt had I been in another Country—far distant from my Family! but I thought I was making a great Sacrifice—that for ought I knew I was quitting all for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake—(short sighted mortals) For I feared my own Weakness—that I might be tempted to wound my own Mind

What a Cross it was to me to oppose your Sentiments at first but I lost nothing by it, neither I believe will any man lose in the End by acting uprightly

When you mention their forging Letters at first I thought you might be mistaken but when you mention your own, in that you cannot be mistaken unless it be with regard to the Party doing it I believe they have in general a good opinion of Yr. Excellency—If any should suppose what is published, it may arise from that false conclusion that some make; that if a man acts so and so he must have a bad Heart, and on the contrary if he is believed to have a good Heart that then he cannot act so or think thus without being misled. Providence can more easily cause Wars by suffering or causing opposite Parties to see Things in a different Light. As to my own Part I gave no one any Reason to judge of Yr. Excellency in any manner different from the Truth—what I said was in general Terms rather abstracted from Politicks, and the substance of what I said at S. I. [Staten Island] was that you rather esteemed a man that acted from principle than otherwise, tho' there should be a difference in Sentiments No one saw Yr. Letters neither had I any thoughts of shewing them except it might be to Friends on occasion; but that they never occurred to my mind was a proof among others of a superior Power overruling

I was Yesterday at Mt Vernon, where I hope it will please God to return You in Time & [I] like the House because it is uncommon for there has always appeared too great a Sameness in our Buildings.

Mrs. Fairfax joins with me in Respects to Yr Excellency & Mrs Washington and I remain with great Regard Yr Excellency's most obliged & affect:hble Serv.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

I hope to be excused for not sending one more fair considering our situation.

** Fairfax to Washington **
[DLC]

Towlston April 10th: 1778

DEAR SIR

I had an opportunity of writing to Yr Excellency lately from Alexandria; but the peculiar Situation I was in prevented me from writing more fully at that time. I advanced one Position only which will be the Ground of this Letter, namely, that Providence carries on Wars the more readily by causing or suffering People to see the same Things in a different Light. And from the pleasure I felt in perceiving Your Sentiments agree with mine in regard to a particular Providence, it led me to judge of the additional pleasure I should have if our Sentiments coincided in other Points also. But tho' this may not happen it is still a Satisfaction to communicate our Thoughts without risking the Loss of Friendship, which I have always the more readily cultivated with Yr Excellency from a Persuasion that it would never be in the power of any other Person to interrupt it, and that if it was lost it would be my own Fault alone.

The following observations may lead me to remark on those which You favoured me with lately.

It has appeared to me, that at the Beginning of these Troubles

the People of Great Britain thought that if they gave Way at that time, America would take Encouragement therefrom and shake off her Dependency; and on the other Hand America was persuaded that if she acquiesced, she would be taxed and perhaps without End. Now both these Opinions seemed to me wrong. For as to the former, whatever designs or Wishes a small Part might have had, the great Body of the People, at least in this and many other Parts of America, had none towards it. On the other Side whatever Designs the Ministry may have had, they could not well have succeeded without the Concurrence of the English Nation, and what could procure that more readily than the Supposition that America aimed at Independency. From Genl. Burgoyne's Letter to Genl. Lee it appears that many unconnected with the Ministry supposed it. It was his opinion too, as also that Gt. Britain would not enforce Taxation because it was her Interest not to do it. But Genl. Lee says it is the Principle we contend for. But if the Effect ceases why contend for the Principle? Misunderstandings were necessary and they seem to have been contrived by superior Powers to answer some End, whether to establish a new Government here, or only a Punishment for the Sake of Reformation only Time must discover. But when we consider the gradual Manner in which the Alteration took Place, one Regulation making way for another, the keeping so clear from internal Divisions, and the wisdom attending our Councils in general with the strange Proceedings on the other side with respect to the End aimed at, the former seems the more probable. The present Times have served to strengthen my opinion of a superintending Providence more than any Events that ever before fell under my notice I have thought to perceive it in the Publications, the false as well as true tending to rouse the Spirits of Men to what has happened; as also in the Representations here, of the weakness of Gt. Britain, and there of the weakness of America. So that I have not been so much surprised at any thing as otherwise I should have been, having from the Beginning dreaded a civil War.

The Instances to be met with in Scripture of a Governing Providence are so many, that we cannot well believe the one without believing the other. But how it is done is not so easy to conceive. But

may we not suppose Thoughts to be infused into our minds, w[hi]ch may be stirred up by such Thoughts as may suit the various tempers of men. These thoughts may lead to Actions and these again to more. Some believe it strongly with regard to individuals, and as they compose a Community the whole may be governed, and yet the will left free. A Father may lay such obstacles before a Child stragling towards a Precipice as may stop it without any Infringement on its Will. It's Heavenly Father may suggest to its mind such Thoughts as may deter it from proceeding, or can put it into the Heart of some other Person to call and seek for it. Infinite Wisdom then can controul our Actions, can raise up and pull down and the human Instruments be still accountable for their Conduct. He can prepare some by the Exercise of Patience and Fortitude for those Exigencies where uncommon Patience is required. He can lay [sic] the seeds of future Broils [sic] in imperfect Establishments, to be called forth at the future day: and in countries where there is nothing foreign to excite a War, or one internal is more necessary, Fuel may be found or prepared. Some in reading of cruel & arbitrary Tyrants may have their minds so impressed with disgust as to be led to dislike a Monarchy; others from the irregular and oppressive proceedings of some Republicks may as much dislike them: hence a Byas [bias], and a cause of variance when some designed occasion calls it forth. God is not only said to create Peace but Evil: Isaiah XLVth: I form the Light and create darkness: I make Peace and create evil. I the Lord do all those things. In another Place he saith—Is there Evil in a City and I have not created it? To him therefore must we look for Peace. But I am sorry that there appears no Prospect of it, having had some hopes of it since the middle of October. They who have been the wicked Instruments of these Troubles I agree with You have great punishments in store and perhaps waiting for their Repentance and that the British Ministry little dreamt of the Opposition that has been made. If the same Men think what was at first desired was reasonable and refused it from vile Motives how wicked must they be! but I must judge of them as of the rest of the World without Prejudice, for they are nothing to me nor ever were; They may be a wicked Set for anything I know, but You may remember that it seemed to me at first that from [what] had happened the face of

Affairs would appear in a different Light in England than what was generally thought—and I have since believed that it was designed that it should be represented in a false view to both sides. It does not hinder the wicked actors from being obnoxious to divine Punishment.

The Commissioners may have been detained 'till the Force was ready which was preparing—and this was contrived by instilling into their minds I suppose that having a gt. [great] Force with them they would be able to treat upon better Terms—and so the Time being prolonged Independency took place and the Treaty rendered ineffectual: and alternate Successes will prolong the War till our Cries reach the Throne of Heaven.

That Men of any Character should descend to what You mention is so extraordinary that I hope you'll pardon me for having doubted at first Sight whether You might not have been mistaken; for among the many groundless Surmises I have not been accustomed to doubt your Informations, knowing no One more cautious, but the Thought was sudden, and as suddenly expressed—as also concerning the Party doing it, having in mind what I had heard concerning a Party which I hope is at an End; for tho' as a Friend I might wish Yr Excellency detached from the Army, yet as an American for many Reasons should be sorry for it. Would to God that the English Nation would look forward fifty or a hundred years, & establish a Commercial Treaty; or if that can't be had that the Terms offered may be plain and certain

I should have been happy in the Alliance which was in Agitation, and the more so as it would have met with Your Approbation. But considering the Subject of this Letter no one ought more readily to acquiesce with the divine Will than Yr. Excellency's Most obliged & obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

Mr. Carlyle¹ tells me he has been applying for the direction of my Brother's Estate.

¹John Carlyle, an Alexandria merchant, was married to Sarah Fairfax, sister of both Bryan and George William. The latter had left Belvoir, returning to England with his wife in 1773. He did, however, retain his Virginia properties, which was the estate Carlyle sought to manage.

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

Towlston Janry 14th: 1779

DEAR SIR

I received Your Excellency's Favour of the 21st: of April in a reasonable Time after the date of it, and think Your Sentiments and Advice therein very just & proper; but that before this I have not accounted for my Conduct in that Matter was altogether owing to an Unwillingness to interrupt You about unnecessary Business till a more leisure Season.

The day before the date of mine of the 29th: of March I was at Mt. Vernon, and left a Letter for Mr. Custis informing him that I expected to be able to pay him what I owed him soon, if he still desired it, which I mentioned I believe I thought it would be to his disadvantage to receive it, and the next day wrote to Yr. Excellency about it. Now what induced me to go down to him the last Week in April was the hearing that he was going to the Northw[ard] and as he had at first desired the Money and did not desist from it on the abovementioned Letter, I did not know what occasion he might have for it, and accordingly went down and paid it intending however to make some future Satisfaction when he would be willing to receive it. And this was the Reason for not waiting longer for Yr. Answer, after occasioning the Trouble of it, and I desire it should appear in it's true Light, for when my Heart is knit to any Person the Apprehension of any Umbrage will give Uneasiness. The Bond was delivered up but the Mortgage was not—In Case any Accident should happen to me I desire that this Letter may be considered as a Declaration that I have not made Satisfaction for the whole of that Debt

I did myself the pleasure to write to You in April at Easter, or rather at Easter the Letter was left at Go.Town partly in Answer to the long one you had been pleased to favour me with in March. I

continue to hope more & more that the Time is drawing near when You will be returned to Your Friends and Acquaintance, and a lasting Peace takes place, the Blessings of which we are so little sensible of when we enjoy it.

I shall be glad of Your Directions with regard to Mrs. Savages Papers, which Colo. Harrison sent to me when he left Alexandria. I hear he is now there and expect he may be the Conveyancer of this Letter if he should return soon. Doctor Savage in the Summer had had a Report of his Wife's death, but we have heard Nothing certain concerning it.

I wish Your Excellency every Happiness, and being deeply sensible of your Favors remain with the greatest Regard Yr Excellency's most obliged & affect hble Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

** Fairfax to Washington **
[DLC]

Towlston Augst. the 18th: 1779

DEAR SIR

I have lately received Yr. Excellency's Favor of the 30th of June, and altho' I ought not to desire to hear from you yet it gives me great pleasure to receive one of your Letters, knowing from Experience the Falsehood of that Position advanced by some, that when a Man confers favours upon his Friend beyond the possibility of his Requitall, he thereby loses him; but they who think so know little of real Gratitude.

Your Kindness also to Mrs. Savage should stir me up to do what I can in her Affair when I have consulted some Person on it. The Hearing that the Courts of Law were opened was the Cause of my mentioning it; so I am sensible that You cannot at present do any Thing in it. This much I thought it necessary to write by way of acknowledging the Receipt of your Favour; But You need to make no Apologies for not answering Letters; and I must beg that your great Politeness may not induce You to write me one, but Upon some Business which may call for it.

And now having begun a Letter I will mention something relating to myself which perhaps may not be improper to a Friend; and that is the perplexing Situation I have been in more or less for more than three years, relating to the Subject of Preaching; and this besides the many trials I have gone thro' of various Sorts, which in the End have been of Service to me as an individual; for sufferings and Hardships are of great Service to the Mind, as I don't doubt you've experienced.

Tho' it is a very nice point to steer an even Course between the two Extremes of Enthusiasm and of no Religion, as also between the former & that of Lukewarmness, which is represented as a dangerous State, yet it ought to be desired; and tho' I am told that there is no danger of any Person's falling into Enthusiasm who is afraid of it, as I have been; yet at the same time I have been apprehensive that that very Fear might deprive me of a greater good.

Not only our Church but every other Party require a Declaration from the Person applying for Ordination, that they are moved thereto by the Holy Spirit; and having myself been much exercised at times upon the Subject, and considering that it was the first choice of my Life (tho' then laughed out of it) and at many times since it has been my determination, as far God would enable me to keep it, to spend the remainder of My Life in the Ministry; but I have often been checked in any Attempts of that Sort by the Impropriety of doing it without some human Authority also, and have therefore generally confined myself to that Method or some like it that many other Laymen use. Then on the other hand to refrain, when there is no way of getting an Appointment, and every man seems to be left

at Liberty, and Sinners want reclaim [in]g and perhaps no Peace 'till a general Reformation, may be as wrong. So that what with these doubts, and the Consideration of those many Circumstances which may make me believe it to be the will of God, or not, and the Backwardness I find at times from Indolence, and the Fear of Shame, and then the doubts whether the bearing the Cross be as essential now as ever—these things I say throw me sometimes into a most distressing Perplexity. Which I mention that you may know the Situation of one of your Friends who trusts that he means well and who is with the greatest Regard Yr. Excellency's most obliged & affect hble. St.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

I believe I need not apologize for the paper I write to you on.

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[Historical Society of Pennsylvania]

Janry the 18th: 1782

DEAR SIR

It would have given me Satisfaction to have paid my Compliments to Yr. Excellence when You passed thro' this County;¹ but when You were coming from the Northward I supposed on Account of the short Stay you made at Mt. Vernon that it would be more agreeable

¹ Following his victory over the British Army and the surrender of Lord Cornwallis on 19 Oct 1781, Washington left Yorktown on 4 Nov, passed through Fairfax County in the middle of that month, and arrived in Philadelphia on 26 Nov. (Freeman *George Washington*, V 398-403)

to be without Company and therefore did not think of doing it; and when You returned, You were departed again before I heard of it. Yet it is some Satisfaction to me to do it in writing, and to assure You that I can yield to none of your Friends in point of Attachment to You, not doubting but it will last always, as I find not the least Diminution of that Regard which was so much heightened by your friendly Kindness to me when in distress. In Answer to your Favor when You inclosed Mrs. Bomford's Letter I think I informed Yr. Excellency, that I intended to consult with some one with regard to Mrs. Savage's Affairs and accordingly desired Mr. Nicholas to apply to the Attorney to undertake it and since that I have heard Nothing about it.

As I mentioned in that Letter so I must report it in this that I hope You will not take the trouble to write in Return, as otherwise I should not have writ at this time when I had nothing particular to require it.

I remain with great Regard Yr. Excellency's most obliged & Obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

** Fairfax to Washington **
[DLC]

Towlston March the 21st: 1782.

DEAR SIR

I am told that a Letter passing under Your Excellency's Inspection will be suffered to go to New York, and therefore I take the Liberty to inclose one for Your Perusal and wish to have it take that Passage as it is a Letter of Consequence, and beg the Favor of You to have it sealed if not thought improper.

The good old Baron in Frederick having died this Winter, the

Paper that was left at Mt. Vernon has come to my Hands.¹ It contains a Power of Attorney from the present Lord Fairfax² (executed before he left the Country) to my Brother to act in his Behalf, with a like Authority from him to me, which not having a Witness to it tho' in his Hand-writing, I am advised not to act under, without further Advice. Yet it is proper that I should give as early Intelligence of it as I can.

A fourth part of the Negroes is left to me, and the reversion of three Annuities of £100 St.g [sterling] each to three of my younger Children.

I remain with great Regard Yr. Excellency's most obliged & Obedt. St.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

** Washington to Fairfax **
[Fitzpatrick, DLC]

Newburgh, April 22, 1782

DEAR SIR

Your favor of the 21st. Ult^o., covering a letter for the present Lord Fairfax, came to my hands about Eight days ago; the latter, was immediately sealed and sent into New York, with other letters which came at the sametime from Colo. Martin;³ altho' the good old Lord had lived to an advanced age, I feel a concern at his death and wish the partition of his Estate had been more in your favor.

I have received, and thank you for your former favor of the 18th. of

¹Thomas sixth Lord Fairfax died at Greenway Court, his home in the Shenandoah Valley near Winchester, on 9 Dec 1781

²Robert younger brother of Thomas became the seventh Lord Fairfax upon the latter's death

³Thomas Bryan Martin, nephew and land agent of Thomas, sixth Lord Fairfax

Jany.; the assurances of unabated friendship on your part are flattering and pleasing to me; and call for an acknowledgment, which I can make with truth, of reciprocal regard. on mine. It will ever give me pleasure to hear of your health and prosperity, with much esteem, and sincere Affection I am etc.

[GO: WASHINGTON]

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

Towlston Decr. the 26th: 1782.

DEAR SIR,

I received a Letter lately from Doctor Sa.[vage] who lives in No. Carolina wherein he expresses his Expectation that we would discontinue the Suit against him as Mrs. Savage he says has been so long dead, and offers to pay Yr. Excellency what Sums you have been so kind as to advance her. I wrote to him in Answer that I did not know certainly or would take Advice what should be done in this Case; but that I thought it might be proper to continue the Suit for the Benefit of her Heirs. And since that I wrote to Mr. Nicholas concern[ing] it, and to know what had been done in the matter, as since I put the Papers in his hand desiring him to engage Mr. Randolph in the Business, I had heard Nothing of it; not having Had an Answer in Chancery sent to me to be sworn to. I have had no other Advice of Mrs. Savage's Death except a Report of it two or three years ago. I did not return Yr. Letters from her as not thinking it needful. I intended to keep them till You should be returned in Peace and Safety to Mt. Vernon.

I received Your Excellency's Favor of the 22d. April in due time, and am sure that Yr. kind Expressions call for as warm an Acknowl-

edgement on my Part also. I have long cultivated Yr. Friendship from a Persuasion that no one could deprive me of it, and that if I lost it, it would be purely my own Fault; knowing that if You should hear any thing that might tend to lessen Yr. Regard, You would not withdraw it, without asking me whether it was true or not. I should not have gone to far in my Expressions in that Letter, but that I was satisfied that You knew me too well to suppose it could arise from any desire to flatter. The overflowings of Friendship may be indulged when Both parties are assured of each other's Sincerity.

I thank Yr Excellency for what You are pleased to say concerning the Partition of a certain Estate. Considering all Circumstances I was a little surprised, and on Accot. of my trust in Providence somewhat staggered.

Janry the 8th: I was thinking to write the foregoing relating to Doctor Savage some little time before Christmas, and when I wrote it as I had receiv'd a Letter from my Brother, I delayed closing it for a few days intending to beg the Favor of your Excellency to inspect and forward the inclosed Letters as You kindly did the last Spring: yet I do it with diffidence,—not from the want of confidence in your Friendship but because You may have many applications of this Sort amidst more weighty Business. I remain with Respect & great Regard Yr. Excellency's Most obliged & obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

* *Washington to Fairfax* *
[Fitzpatrick, DLC]

Newburgh, February 5, 1783

DEAR SIR

Your letter begun on the 26th. of Decr. and finished the 8th. of Janry. came to my hands by the last Post. The Inclosures for Lord Fairfax and your Brother I have put under cover to Sir Guy Carleton who will

I am perswaded send them in the Packet for England. I have only to add on this subject that you need not at any time hesitate at, or apologize for sending Letters of friendship or on business through my hands into New York; as I shall always have pleasure in being the medium of conveyance, and if Lord Fairfax and your Brother would adopt the same mode, nothing but the danger of the Seas, and risque of capture, would impede their passage to, and from you.

I scarce know what opinion to be of respecting the application of Doctr. Savage; because in the first place we have no certainty of his Wifes death Secondly because we do not (admitting the fact) know how she may have disposed of her Estate; and how far her support while living depended upon the credit of the Annuity. In a word how far it has been anticipated by Loans, which are charged on it. Mr. Randolph, the Attorney General, if the Papers are in his hands will be best able to decide the point upon a principle of Law and equal justice to all parties and to this Issue I would wish to leave the matter.

I have no occasion of the Letters from Mrs. Savage; but wish if there are any other Papers in my possession, at Mount Vernon, that are necessary to, or can through [sic] any light upon this business that you would apply to Mr. Lund Washington¹ for and make such use of them as the nature of the case may require.

At present, we are fast locked in Frost and Snow; without a title of News. We look wisfully [sic] to the East, and to the South for an Arrival; supposing the first European Vessel will bring the Speech of the British King, the Addresses, and debates thereupon; the last of which I expect, will discover the Ultimatum of the National determination respecting the continuance of the War, or acceptance of Peace upon such terms as the Negotiations for it have been able to strike out. If happily for all parties, the last should be the choice, it would give me much pleasure to assure you personally, of the unimpaired friendship of Dr. Sir, etc.

[GO WASHINGTON]

¹Lund Washington, George's cousin was manager at Mt. Vernon during the war

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

March the 22d, 1783

DEAR SIR,

I rec[ei]v[ed] Your Excellency's Favor of the 5th of Febry a few days ago, and encouraged by Yr. Offer inclose another Letter to Lord Fairfax, supposing it cannot be improper to inform a Person abroad of any Act that may essentially affect his Interest, as a Law is supposed to be a matter of public Notoriety. Yet in this I refer myself to Yr. Excellency's determination.

I have written to Mr. Randolph mention[ing] that neither of us think the Suit ought to be dismissed, yet desiring his opinion and that he would take such Steps as may be proper; and if I should recollect any Paper that may be useful will apply to Mr. Washington for it

We have had great and increasing hopes of Peace from time to time, which have also been often damped, but our last Advice is that the Preliminary treaty between Gt. Britain and the States is actually signed.¹ If it should happen when I am next favored with a Line that Your Excellency can give a Confirmation of it or that France has also concluded one I shall hope to hear it; for tho' I have not found myself at Liberty to concur in the public measures yet I do sincerely rejoice in the present Prospect; and hope that that Amor Patriae which has glowed in my breast almost ever since I knew the meaning of the words will continue to the End of Life. A man may love his Country tho' he should mistake in the means to promote it's Interests

¹ Following the surrender of Lord Cornwallis to Washington 19 Oct. 1781, a motion passed the House of Commons 27 Feb. 1782 urging George III to end the war. preliminary articles of peace between Great Britain and the United States were signed 30 Nov. 1782. France and Spain concluded preliminary treaties with Great Britain in Jan. 1783 and the Treaty of Paris, ending the American Revolutionary War, was signed on 3 Sept. 1783.

Hoping the Time will not be long before I can personally pay my
Respects, I remain Yr. Excellency's Obliged & affect hble Servt

BRYAN FAIRFAX

* *Washington to Fairfax* *
[VMHB, Collections of Lord Fairfax]

Head Qrs. Newburgh 15th June 1783

DEAR SIR,

The Letter to Lord Fairfax which accompanied your favor to me of the 22d March, went into New York immediately upon its arrival at this place; & no doubt obtained a ready passage to England.—I should not have delayed so long to inform you of this, & (as you seemed to desire it of me) to have announced the ratification of the Provisional, & Preliminary articles of Peace, had I not been sure that you did not doubt the first; & that the second would come officially from the fountain head, before any letter from me could reach you.—I now, only await the arrival of the Definitive Treaty to bid adieu to public life;¹ & in retirement to seek that repose which a Mind always on the stretch, & embarrassed by a thousand difficulties in the Course of Eight successive years stands much in need of.

Your direction to the Attorney General is, I think, very proper; and it is my opinion we should be governed wholly by his advice in the Suit of Mrs Savage—whether she is Dead, or alive.—

I have been informed (by Mr. Lund Washington) that some person has petitioned or is about to petition the Court of Loudoun for an Acre of the Land I bought of you on Difficult to Build a Mill on; but I hope no advantage will be permitted, by that Worshipful bench, to

¹See note 1 to previous letter

be taken of my absence in this Affair.—The losses I have already sustained by an Eight years absence from home & the total neglect of my private concerns, are already capitally great—they need not be augmented by lessening the value of what is left me —With the greatest esteem and regard I am—Dr Sir Yr Most Affecte Hble Servt

GO WASHINGTON

** Fairfax to Washington **
[DLC]

Towlston July the 19th: 1783.

DEAR SIR

I have received Your Excellency's Favor of the 15th of June. When I wrote my last Letter we had not then received any certain Accounts of the conclusion of the Peace, tho' we did a few days afterwards by hearing of the Arrival of the French Cutter at Philadelphia.

Some months ago there was a Hint given me of an Intention of building a Mill on Difficult, but whether I was told that there would be an Application to me with regard to it I am uncertain, as I took but little Notice of it, and Your Excellency's Land on the other side did not come into my Mind. I have not yet been able to learn from what enquiry I have had made that any Application has or will be made to the Court about it When it was mentioned to me I think that I was inclined to believe that it could not be done without my concurrence neither yet am I persuaded that it can: and most surely if it depends on me while I have it in mind nothing shall be done to Yr. Prejudice. The man who lives at the Bridge has a Lease from me for the Land on the South Side of the Road; and since he settled it I let him have also what lies on the North Side to be added to his Lot, for which I signed a piece of writing, which he also signed and w[h]ich I have in my

Possession. Now I should think he w^ould. not think that he had any legal Title when I had the writing, which is only a memorandum of my consent to it & his acknowledgement of the Rent he w^ould. pay. I mean to abide by the writing yet I don't think he is entituled [sic] from it to build a Mill there—I suppose that the lower side of the Road is the only proper place. When I said if it depended on me it should not be done, I meant consistently with what the Man may have reason to expect from me. I don't think he can expect any ample Lease from me whereby he could have a Right to apply for the condemnation of any opposite Land; for it is only such a Memorandum as I have made with regard to others who have desired Leave to occupy Land adjoining to their Lots.

I remain with great Esteem & Respect Dr. Sir Yr. Excellency's most obliged affect hble Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

P.S.

During the War I made no Apology for the Paper I was sometimes forced to writ on; but now I must say I am without any better; and I tho^ugh^t. You would excuse it. The same Messenger I send for Paper might carry this Letter.

** Fairfax to Washington **
[DLC]

Towlston August the 4th 1783

DEAR SIR

I wrote to Your Excellency about ten days ago relating to the building a Mill on Difficult, and mentioned that Hint that had also been given to me about it, but that I had not been able to learn that

there was any such design and also my Opinion that it would not be done without my concurrence, which would not be had. Since which I have had another Hint from the same Hand, with an application at the same time to purchase one or two acres of me for that Purpose. If it is the same Person that informed Mr. Washington of it, it does not look well. However if there be a Design in the Tenant & others to build one, the Court may perhaps consider Yr. Excellency's Absence and not hastily grant an Order of condemnation. I have supposed that You probably might be returning Home to enjoy that Quiet so necessary after such a continued Application of Mind, and therefore purpose to send this to Mount Vernon either to wait Yr. Arrival, or to be forwarded as it may be tholugh[t] proper.

From something I saw in the Papers I was for a time uncertain whether You might not take a Voyage to Paris—in either Case I think it would please me to hear of Your finding that Ease from Care that is so refreshing to the Mind after long Toils and Embarassment

I remain with great Attachment Yr. Excellency's Most obliged & Obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

IV

The Reverend Mister Fairfax

and

President Washington

1786-1796

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

Towlston Janry the 9th: 1786

DEAR SIR

I have sent the Bearer for a few Slips of the weeping willow You were so kind as to offer me, as well as to ask your Advice, in case I should not have an opportunity hereafter, where an Execution should be sent vs Dr. Savage's Estate. I have bro[ugh]t. up with me a copy of the decree whereby we are at Liberty to proceed at Law upon the Judgement obtained. I must apply to the Clerk's office for a scire facias in order to have an execution, as well as to bring on a Judgement upon the subsequent annuities; and in case I should not be able to do myself the pleasure of Going to Mt. Vernon before that time, I beg to know Yr. opinion into which county it would be adviseable to send an Execution—for no Execution can be had in Carolina without commencing a fresh suit there. The Doctor had Lands in Culpeper & prince William as well as in this county: perhaps an Execution m[igh]t. be sent into each, of which I shall know more when I hear from Mr. Cl [?] Moore to whom I applied to prosecute the Business in the county court.

I should not have troubled You with this but I tho[ugh]t. this matter of the Execution a material point.

I shall hope to have the Favor of Yr. Company when You come into these parts—By what I learn I imagine the managers will have hard work to controul those that they have lately bro[ugh]t. up.¹ Our Compliments to Mr. Washington & Family—& I remain Dr Sir Yr. obliged & affect. hble Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

¹See note to next letter

* *Washington to Fairfax* *
[VMHB, Collections of Lord Fairfax]

Mount Vernon 10th Jan'y. 1786

DEAR SIR,

I have ordered my Gardr to furnish your Servant with Six of the Weeping Willows that have roots; and as many cuttings as he pleases to take.—If he does not bring enough for your purposes—or if these should not succeed, you may have a fresh supply at any time —

I wish it was in my power to offer you any advice that would be availing in the case of Savage but the truth it is, I do not know where his property lyes—and till the receipt of your letter knew not, or did not recollect that, he died possessed of a foot of Land in this, or Loudoun County.—If the Law will justify us in it, my opinion would be, that the Execution should be laid, or obtained ready to lay, on as much property as will unquestionably answer the demand—when that is satisfied we want no more,—the residue (if any) being untouched, cannot be injured; especially if it consists of Land.—I should prefer beginning the sale in this County—because least troublesome.—

By your not mentioning the hound puppies, it is probable you may have altered your mind respecting them; but if the case is otherwise, I am unable to supply you at present, having lost all but one, and the chance of his living not much in his favor.

I shall always have great pleasure in seeing you at this place, and shall be equally happy in paying my respect to you at Towlston.—I am sorry to hear that my fears of, are likely to be realized by, the Servants which were bought for the use of the Potomack Compa.—To avoid this evil—as much as possible—was the inducement with the Directors to offer such (as we thought) encouraging terms for

the hire of Negros,¹—ineffectually it should seem, as I believe we have got none yet.—Mrs. Washington joins me in Compliments, and best wishes for yourself, Mrs. Fairfax & family,—and with very great esteem & regard I am Dr Sir Yr Most Obed.& Affecte. Hble Servt

GO WASHINGTON

¹The Patowmack Company of which Washington was president, initially purchased Irish indentured servants to help construct the canal around the Great Falls of the Potomac. The sale of such white servants was common in northern Virginia even as late as the mid-1780s, in early August 1784 Washington purchased three Irish servants from 300 offered for sale by Alexandria merchant John Fitzgerald, to work at Mt. Vernon (*Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser*, 5 Aug. 1784, and "A List of Servants & Redemptions that has been Freed & Redeemed" mss. in library, Mt. Vernon.) This was apparently a satisfactory arrangement for Washington as two of the servants whose indentures were purchased in 1784, Cornelius McDermett, a mason, and Thomas Mahoney, a carpenter, were subsequently hired to work at Mt. Vernon after their indentures had expired.

It was initially decided to have three classes of labor to work on the canal: free white hired labor, white indentured servants, and Negro slaves. In September 1785 Thomas Johnson, a director of the Patowmack Company, wrote to Washington that it was "desireable to have Negroes as well as purchase servants but imagine very few can be got in this State [Maryland]. As slaves for hire were not readily available, a substantial number of indentured servants, mostly Irish, were purchased from European ships landing at Baltimore and Philadelphia. The free white labor, both hired and servants, turned out to be quite unreliable, and the Irish especially gave trouble to the construction superintendents. On 1 Jan. 1786, only ten days before this letter to Fairfax, the company had advertised in the *Alexandria Gazette* that several of the servants had run away, were soon recaptured, and that their heads and eyebrows had been shaved to "apprize the county should they again make a similar attempt." On 21 June 1786, James Ramsey, the construction engineer, again advertised that eight Irish servants, two of them shaved, had absconded, and offered a reward of £10 each or £60 for the group. Again on 10 July, four more Irish servants ran away; one of these, Hugh Taylor, was among the group advertised for in June; this time he took with him a servant woman from a nearby plantation whom he claimed to have married. Although Washington and the other directors of the company were not able to be rid of servants and white hired labor entirely after October 1786, they did manage to hire a number of slaves at £20 per annum plus clothing and rations. As Fairfax was still living at Towlston in 1786, which was quite near the canal construction, he may have had some first-hand knowledge of the labor problem at the falls. (Corra Bacon-Foster, *Early Chapters in the Development of the Potomac Route to the West* [Washington 1912] 70-73.)

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

Towlston Febry the 7th: 1786.

DEAR SIR

I received the Favor of Yr. Letter from the Great Falls—and was sorry that I did not hear of your being there till after your departure as I should certainly have done myself the pleasure of waiting on You, especially as I had had thoughts from time to time of taking a Ride there I was the more concerned to hear of your setting off at Night, and was a little afraid that your delicacy in regard to giving trouble at a late hour prevented You from calling at Towlston. But Mr Stewart according to his own Account was to blame, for a man ought not to suffer his own Zeal to oppose entirely the Will of his Patron or best Friend.

With regard to the Wood cut at the Place I purpose to inform Mr. Potts, that as I expect and have not doubted but that ample Satisfaction would be made me I am easy with regard to what has been cut, as well as what may be used, which may be settled at a future day. A man has applied to me for an Acre of ground thereabouts, but I have declined it, not knowing but it might be disagreeable to the Board, and I am since glad that I did, because he might have kept a tipling house and been hurtful—and therefore shall continue to deny till at some future meeting here I may mention the Subject. I am with great Regard, Dr Sir Yr most obliged & obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

Towlston Nov. the 16th. 1787.

DEAR SIR

This is to acknowledge Your Favor in sending me an Accoun[t] of my Brother's Will¹ and also the Receipt of the Watch by Mr. Muse.² It can't be expected that you should act as an Executor upon this Occasion amidst that multiplicity of Business you are engaged in. In a few Instances I was so circumstanced that I could not comply with L[or]d. Fairfax's desire as well as my Brother's tho' I had a great Regard for them both yet they both treated me afterwards in a loving manner: therefore I suppose they entered into some hasty Resolutions with respect to myself and my Son Thomas who was innocent with respect to them and has behaved to me w[ith] dutifulness as well as a proper Fortitude under difficulties w[hilch] my own Negligence as well as misfortunes have exposed him to.

Mrs. Fairfax joins me in respectful Compliments to Mrs. Washington & I am Dr Sir with great Regard & Esteem Yr. most obedt. & obliged hble Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

¹George William Fairfax, Bryan's older brother, died 3 Apr. 1787, at Bath, England.

²Bataile Muse, the agent for G W Fairfax's Virginia property, subsequently hired by Washington as rental agent for his lands outside of Fairfax County (Jackson Twohig, eds., *Diaries of Washington*, IV, 215.)

* *Washington to Fairfax* *
[Fitzpatrick, DLC]

Mount Vernon, April 6, 1789.

DEAR SIR

Sometime ago Mr. Muse¹ informed me by letter, that he expected an order for the delivery to him of the Papers belonging to the Estate in my possession. I answered they were subject to, and ready for that order whenever presented; but as a friend I would advise him to let them remain in your hands and draw out such *only* as he might want. To this he seems perfectly agreeable and I mention the matter before I leave home, that if you incline to take charge of them they will be delivered by my Nephew Majr. George A. Washington at anytime you may call for them.

Old as the date of the enclosed letter is, it has been but lately received. It is my sincere wish that this tedious and irksome business could be brought to a close; but less than ever will it be in my power now, to afford any aid towards the accomplishment of it. Mrs. Bomford must therefore turn her attention to some others as an Attorney, for the purpose of receiving her money, if it ever should be recovered. With best wishes for Mrs. Fairfax and your family, and with sentiments of sincere regard and friendship. I am etc.

[GO. WASHINGTON]

See note 2 to last letter

** Washington to Fairfax **

[DLC]

New York, January 6, 1790.

DEAR SIR

I received the enclosed letter a few days since from Mrs. Bomford, upon the subject of a legacy which was left her by the late Mrs. Savage, and likewise requesting payment may be made to her for the diet, lodging &c. of that unfortunate woman for upwards of four years.

In my answer to the above letter I have informed Mrs. Bomford that circumstances have put it out of my power to pay particular attention to the affairs of Mrs. Savage, and that I should transmit her letter to you, not doubting but you would give it that attention which it deserved. You will, therefore, my dear Sir, be good enough to give Mrs. Bomford such an answer to her letter, as from your knowledge of the situation of Mrs. Savage's affairs you may be enabled to do, and permit me to add, if this business could be brought to a close it would be a most desirable thing. You will please to make my best compliments acceptable to Mrs. Fairfax and your family, in which I am joined by Mrs. Washington, and I assure you we are not a little pleased to hear that you are about to establish yourselves in the neighbourhood of Mount Vernon,¹ promising ourselves a new source of pleasure from that circumstance whenever we are permitted to return home. With very sincere regard, I am etc.

[GO WASHINGTON]

¹See note 1 to next letter

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

Feb. the 7th: 1790

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

According to your desire I have written to Mrs. Bomford and have informed her of the State of the Suit against Doctor Savage. The delays have been such that I don't wonder at her Surprise in not yet having heard of the Issue of it. The Day I left Mt. Vernon last Winter I spoke to the Lawyer (who had the Management of the Cause after I had taken it out of the hands of the other who had done Nothing in it and who had mislaid the Papers) and desired him to proceed on with it as he had postponed it a few months on Account of what Mr. Mason wrote to me about it. But tho' I spoke to him since about it, yet from what Enquiries I have made I doubt whether it is in a greater Forwardness than it was some years ago

I have moved down to my late Purchase, and it is no small Satisfaction to me that it is not far from Mt. Vernon and much more flattering that your Friendship should continue unshaken, and that I can still hope for the Pleasure of your Company once more.¹ Yet I should think it must be very uncertain, as the same desire as heretofore of yeilding [sic] to the Public Wish may again prolong Your Stay and overpower Your other Wish for Retirement²—At least I think you will be reduced to a great Dilemma. We have an excellent

¹In Jan. 1789 Fairfax purchased 329 acres overlooking Hunting Creek south of Alexandria (at the present 1981, site of the Huntington Metrorail station and the Montebello condominiums) and built a new house there. It was much closer to Mt. Vernon than Fairfax's former home at Towlston Grange. (See note to 30 July 1768, above, and Kilmer and Sweig, *Fairfax Family*, 39-42, 78.)

²As Washington was then president of the United States, he was forced to give up peaceful retirement at his beloved Mt. Vernon to tend to the public business at Philadelphia. Fairfax may also have been anticipating Washington's difficult decision: "the Public Wish may again prolong Your Stay and overpower Your other Wish for Retirement" as to whether to stand for election to a second term of office.

Constitution, yet I am sorry to find some Opinions prevailing that tend gradually to weaken even good Government. As I can deliver my sentiments freely to You I will just mention my Thoughts on some points. If men were perfect in Love they could live happily in Society without Government, because they would do to all Men as they would they should do unto them, and would therefore need no Restraint nor Compulsion. But in proportion as they fall short of this perfect Love they require a Government more or less coercive. This cannot be maintained without subordination and this requires different Ranks and these must be many or few in proportion as a stricter or milder Government is requisite. Of this the Army is a Proof, where a gradual Subordination preserves that order which otherwise could not be kept. Civil Society does not require such strict discipline. Yet still the principle holds good, that in proportion to the Virtue of the People there must be a greater or less Restraint, and this should be supported by a proper Subordination. To this End many different Officers are appointed; but if these are not in some degree respectable in their own Persons their Authority becomes too weak when they derive it only from their Office. For which Reason a perfect Equality amongst Citizens if it could be had, would tend to weaken the hands of Government in every State except where there was perfect Love.

An equal Distribution of Property which some think desirable would be improper for the same Reason. And the Idea of it's Benefit seems to be entertained from that propensity in the World to run from one extreme to another. Because a very great Inequality of wealth has been found hurtful thro' that Oppression which the poor is subject to from those that are very rich, it is concluded that the nearer it is reduced to an equal division, the better it is for the State. But this seems to be a wrong conclusion, and makes this Evil the extreme of the other. The right conclusion in this case appears to be, that a greater Equality would be better, and not an entire one. For the proper Medium if attainable would be such a division of Property as that the richest should not have it in their Power thro' their Influence to oppress, and yet that there should be so much Influence, as that the different Officers chosen from the different

Classes, shall have some weight in exercising their Authority For Men unless very virtuous are not generally to be ruled by the Laws alone and the Authority derived from them

Hence we see how hurtful in the End it must be to lessen that Respect w[hil]ch Magistrates ought to possess, or to omit those accustomed honours which tend to promote it. If Experience proves that a veneration for Magistrates is increased among the Bulk of Mankind by such Usages, it must be impolitic to lay them aside, as it would moreover be better that they had never been, than to discontinue them now that they have been long in Use. A good Government ought to be strengthened and not weakened: and where the Laws are good no Injury can arise from a proper Enforcement of them, but much Evil will follow from it's Neglect.

The Subject of Slavery too has been spoken of in such a Manner as tends to render those who are under it more dissaffected than they would have been. It does not appear that either Xst [Christ] or his Apostles ever said any thing that could have such a tendency,—The Peace and Quiet of Society is what they aimed at.³

These and some other points have given me some Uneasiness lest the Seeds of future discord should be sowing whilst we have otherwise good Hope from the Establishment of a government as good as any if not superior to most.

If these Errors should not increase the Evil will not be great—old opinions are not soon eradicated; but the danger arises from their spreading & continuance—which is to be feared, because Error is more easily and more readily propagated than the Truth.

³Fairfax's desire for moderation in all things, even the vexing question of Negro slavery, is again evident here. He may also have been making reference to conflict over the slavery issue within his own family. The *American Museum or Universal Magazine*, Dec. 1790, published an article by Bryan's third son, Ferdinando (then age sixteen), on a "Plan for liberating the negroes within the united states." Ferdinando later became firmly opposed to slavery. A codicil to his will, written in 1806 and probated in 1820, states "so fully am I persuaded not only of the original injustice of slavery but also of its ill effects, . . . that I do hereby declare it as my Will and attention that my children shall inherit my property . . . only on Condition that they Shall never hold a slave for life." (Kilmer and Sweig, *Fairfax Family*, 109-110.) Ferdinando was also, as the title of his 1790 article implies, a firm believer in colonization of freed slaves outside of the continental United States. Such sentiments could only have caused consternation in the mind of his "status quo" oriented father.



Mount Eagle, Bryan Fairfax's home near Alexandria, as it appeared in 1914. Fairfax County Photo Archives.



Mount Vernon in 1792, as Washington and Fairfax would have known it during the last decade of their friendship. Artist unknown. Courtesy of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

I know you will pardon me for troubling you with these thoughts because you have heretofore done it when I knew they were unhappily different from your own, and that because of that Justice you shew to all Men, as well as that Friendship with which you have honored me.

Mrs. Fairfax & myself present our Respects to Mrs. Washington and I remain Yr. Excellency's Obligated and obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

My Friends have often asked me to give this Spot a Name and they have proposed so many that I am at a Loss to choose—or how to refuse. Upfield, Upton, Prospect Hall, Clear View—Clermont &c. have been mentioned. If the Request were not too trifling I would beg You to honour me so far as to name it. But if the name should sound too high you'll allow me to say who gave it.⁴

** Washington to Fairfax **
[Fitzpatrick, DLC]

Philadelphia, March 19, 1792

DEAR SIR

I enclose you a letter which I have received from a Mr. Samuel Potts, on the subject of a Legacy left to Mrs. Bomford by the late Mrs. Savage

It is unnecessary to detail to you, my dear Sir, the causes which have put it out of my power to pay any attention to the affairs of Mrs. Savage since the year 1775. You know them well. And I can only

⁴It is not known if Washington provided Mt. Eagle as the name for Fairfax's new home, but the similarity to Mt. Vernon is suggestive

assure you that they still exist, and in a stronger degree, if possible, than heretofore I must, therefore, as I have before mentioned to you, rely upon your endeavours to have every thing relative to that unfortunate womans affairs brought to a close as speedily as the nature of the case will admit: and as you must have a much better knowledge of the present situation of them than I can have I have referred Mr. Potts (as I before did Mrs. Bomford herself) to you for information on the subject, not doubting but you will give him all the satisfaction in your power relative to the business.

Mrs. Washington joins her best wishes for yourself, Mrs. Fairfax and your family, to those of Dear Sir, Your etc.

[GO. WASHINGTON]

** Fairfax to Washington **
[DLC]

Mount Eagle Febry the 17th: 1793

DEAR SIR

As I have always experienced the Sincerity of your Friendship and as on that Account I lay myself open to You more than to any man I now make a little Apology to you in order to make my Mind at ease in regard to a little Incident I am about to mention.

Such is my Regard that I have sometimes been uneasy lest you should be displeased with me. And I remember in particular about 10 or 12 years ago I was very much so; and as I believe that the Lord does sometimes make things known by a Dream, I am strongly inclined to believe that at that time I was in that manner relieved from the Uneasiness I was then under by a Dream in which You appeared to be no ways displeased. But the Subject of this Letter is this. When You last departed from Mt. Vernon You were so kind as to

inform me of it by Your Servant. And as I am always slow in apprehending a thing suddenly, I did not perhaps take it right, when I concluded that You were then gone or going by; whereas You might have intended that I should have met You at the Road, which I thought afterwards when I considered the Message might have been the Case (for I could not, considering Your Station, notwithstanding Yr. Friendship, suppose You would call at my House). This has made me a little uneasy at times, lest there should be the smallest Appearance of a Slight on my Part. And I mention it for my own Satisfaction. Hoping that you will not give Y[ou]rself the trouble even to write that You accept the Apology, because I am persuaded You will; being perfectly assured that You believe what I say.

I sincerely condole with you on the death of Major Washington¹ which I heard of yesterday—For as I admired him, it must be an afflictive Loss to You.

My Respects to Mrs. Washington, and I am with much Respect & Regard, Your obliged & Obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

** Washington to Fairfax **
[Fitzpatrick, DLC]

Philadelphia, March 6, 1793.

DEAR SIR:

I have been favored with your Letter of the 17 Ult^o: and beg you to be assured that nothing was ever farther from my thoughts than taking amiss your not coming to the road to see me the day I

¹Washington's nephew, George Augustine Washington, the son of George's brother Charles, served as resident manager at Mt. Vernon while Washington served as president in Philadelphia from 1789 until his death on 5 Feb. 1793.

passed by your House on my return to this City; as an unequivocal proof of this fact, I have only to assure you that I should not have been found there, had you come out to it; for it was not until I was opposite to your House, that I sent the Servant in, without making any halt myself, being in a hurry to meet and do some business with the Commissioners of the Federal District, at George Town, before Mrs. Washington should come up, that we might proceed some miles on our Journey (which we accordingly did) that afternoon. Motives of friendship and respect was all I had in view by sending in to know how you did as I was about to leave the Country and had it not in my power, for the reason just mentioned, to call upon you myself for that purpose.

I thank you for your kind condolence on the Death of my Nephew. It is a loss I sincerely regret, but as it is the will of Heaven, whose decrees are always just and wise, I submit to it without a murmur.

Before I conclude, permit me to ask if anything is done, or likely to be done in the case of Savage. I am extremely anxious to see all matters in which I have had any agency, brought to a close, altho' the issue thereof should be unfavorable, before I quit the stage of Life.

My best respects, in which Mrs. Washington unites, are presented to Mrs. Fairfax, and your family; and I am etc.

[GO WASHINGTON]

** Fairfax to Washington **

[DLC]

Mt. Eagle, March the 19th. 1793

DEAR SIR

I have received the Letter which You have done me the Kindness to write tho' unexpected; and received it as another Instance of your

long Friendship; and was also pleased at Your entire submission to the will of Heaven in Your late afflictive Loss, tho' it was no more than I expected. For having encountered & surmounted many & various Difficulties & disappointments, and believing in a superintending Providence, You will also bear with Patience those Afflictions which his Wisdom shall direct

With respect to Mrs. Savage's Affair, there has been another delay when least expected. When Mr. Potts called on me last Summer on his way from Philadelphia to Georgia, it was agreed on between us, upon a Consultation which we had at Mr. L. Lee's, that as Mr. Mason's¹ Ex[ecut]ors or Adm[inistrato]rs had pled, fully administered, and that there was no Prospect of getting any thing in Virginia, Mr. Potts should institute a Suit in our Names in Carolina as he passed along, it being a fine Opportunity for the Purpose—And I made no doubt but that the Suit was depending, till lately I receiv[er]d a Letter from Mr. Potts informing me that he was returned again, or arrived again in America & desired to know whether I had received any thing upon the Accoun[t] of Mrs. Savage—

I have been preparing to get such a Suit commenced in Carolina, and intend to have it done as soon as I can.

Mrs. Fairfax joins me in our Respects to You and Mrs. Washington—I am Your obliged & obedt. Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

The Hope of being able to inform You what I had done towards the commencem[en]t of a Suit has been the Cause of a few day's delay in writing this—

¹ This may refer to Thomson Mason of Strawberry Plain in Loudoun County who died in 1785 or less likely to George Mason of Gunston Hall who died in 1792

** Washington to Fairfax **
[Fitzpatrick DLC]

Mount Vernon, April 9, 1793.

DEAR SIR

At One o'clock in the afternoon on Thursday next, I mean to pay the last respect to my deceased Nephew, by having the funeral obsequies performed.

If you will do me the favor to officiate on the occasion, it will be grateful to myself, and pleasing to other friends of the deceased. No sermon is intended, and but few friends will be present:¹ for these dinner will be ready at half after two Oclk, at which I should be happy and shall expect to see you.

If Mr. Thos. and Ferdinand Fairfax,² or either of them are at Mount Eagle, I should be glad if they would accompany you and I am etc.

[GO WASHINGTON]

Although Fairfax had resigned as rector of Fairfax Parish on 16 July 1792, he was still an ordained Anglican (Episcopal) minister; hence it was natural for Washington to ask his friend to officiate at his nephew's funeral.

²Thomas and Ferdinando were sons of Bryan

* *Washington to Fairfax* *
[Fitzpatrick DLC]

German Town, September 8, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR

It is not my wish to add to the trouble which I am sorry has been thrown upon you (in a manner unavoidably) in the management of the Suit against the Representatives, or Security of the deceased Doctr. Savage But when I am written to on this subject by those who are interested therein, I feel the necessity of making some response lest silence should receive an unfavorable interpretation.

On this ground I give you the trouble of perusing the enclosed letter from a Mr. Peter Trenor, and my answer; after which, let me pray you to put a wafer in the latter, and cause it to be forwarded agreeable to the superscription by the first good conveyance that may present itself to your view

Who Mr. Trenor is I know not. Nor have I any recollection of what he says I wrote to him on the 15th. of Novr. 1786 (having no papers of that date by me, at this place to recur to) I have some imperfect remembrance, it is true, of an application that was made to me by a person in Virginia about the period he mentions, with which I was not favorably impressed, but why I was not so, or whether it came from this person, I am unable to inform you with the least precision; nor is it of such moment as the authenticity and regularity of the papers he alludes to must decide his pretensions

With respects to Mrs. Fairfax, and with very sincere esteem and regard for yourself I remain, etc.

[GO WASHINGTON]

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

Novr. the 4th: 1794

DEAR SIR

I have received Your Favor with the Letters inclosed but I did not receive it till last Week, owing to my not knowing that there was a Letter for me in the Office till it had lain there some time, and I then being from Home did not get it immediately, nor for some days, thro' a mistake also on Acco[un]t. of another Letter that had come to the Office for me in the mean time. And since, I have waited a little that I might inform You that I had sent the one inclosed for Mr. Trenor; but upon different Enquiries being informed that there is no Vessel hereabouts going to Ireland, and Mr. Herbert assuring me that he can get it put a Board a Vessel now at Baltimore about to sail there I have left the Letter with him.

I have not thought much of the trouble I have had ab[ou]t. Mrs. Savage's Business in comparison to the concern I have had in not being able to do anything effectually in it. I have grown very forgetful, and some delays have arisen on that account, but yet small in comparison to the unavoidable delays that have happened. I have this comfort that I have done more in it than I should have done had it been my own Business.

Your Letter to Mr. Trenor must be satisfactory to him, as far as he can be satisfied under a disappointment, as he will perceive the unavoidable difficulties that have arisen. That variety of disappointmen[ts]. I have met with is uncommon. After being disappointed in my Intentions this last Spring both of calling upon Doctor Jones in Northumberland, and of going from Norfolk to Edenton I wrote to the Attorney Genl in North Carolina thro' the Medium of poor Mr. Hipkins, and after some time when I was over the Ridge I received an answer, promising to do what he could, after making the necessary Enquiries, and to inform me further about it. I paid I think five Guineas and sent him the same Papers which I had before sent to

Carolina, and which had been returned. From what little Information he had then been able to get, he seemed to think the Prospect of obtaining what we aim at is not very good But I never received an Answer from Dr. Jones.

I spoke to Colo Simms¹ at the last District Court at Dumfries—He thought the Suit vs Mr. Mason might come on & the matter tried with respect to his Plea: & that the Suit in Carolina might with propriety go on.

Mrs Fairfax joins me in our Respects to You & Mrs. Washington—And I remain with much Esteem DrSir Yr obliged & Obedt. St

BRYAN FAIRFAX

* *Washington to Fairfax* *
[Fitzpatrick, DLC]

Philadelphia, January 3, 1796.

DEAR SIR

Your favor of the 16th. Ulto came Safe, but not in the time which might have been expected from the date of it

Mr. Davie's letter is herewith returned. I do not know that more could have been done than you have attempted to do; but it is exceedingly to be regretted that villainy chicanery, and every species of delay, should bring justice in such jeopardy, if it is not in this instance entirely defeated by them. I shall hope however, that as long as there remains a tolerable chance of coming at it, that the

¹ This may have been Charles Simms of Alexandria who had held various local and state offices, and became chairman of the Alexandria common council and collector for the port of Alexandria after 1795

suit will be prosecuted: and that Colo. Simms and who ever else is employed therein, will exert themselves to the utmost.

I am of opinion that good policy dictates the propriety of assuring them a *handsome fee* or rather a certain percentage if they succeed, and nothing if they do not. Trifling fees are, thrown away upon Lawyers of any eminence for they excite no exertion and it cannot be expected that in a case which is in a manner desperate, and without any appropriate funds, that large fees can be paid from our private purses. My advances to Mrs. Savage in her life time, during the days of her distress, was pretty considerable and the Clerks and Sheriffs fees are continually adding to it. Yours I am persuaded are equal thereto, and together shew the expediency of a vigorous effort which I see no other means of making than the one I have suggested.

My respects, and the compliments. of the Season in which Mrs. Washington joins me, are offered to Mrs. Fairfax and yrself and with sincere esteem etc.

[GO WASHINGTON]

V

A Visit to London,

"My Lord"

1798-1799

** Washington to Fairfax **

[Virginia Historical Society]

Mount Vernon 15th May 1798

DEAR SIR

Herewith, I send you Letters of introduction to Gentlemen with whom I occasionally correspond agreeable to my promise.¹

I also send you a Genealogical account of the family of Fairfax,

¹Fairfax made a trip to England in 1798: it is a mark of his trans-Atlantic renown that Washington, who had never been to England, was able to provide letters of introduction to Bryan Fairfax whose family was still in England, who had visited there in the 1760s and who within six months would accept the title of eighth Lord Fairfax. The letters of introduction were to Sir John Sinclair, an English agriculturalist with whom Washington corresponded, to Rufus King, and to the Earl of Buchan. See Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of Washington*, XXXIV, 261.

which was presented to me by the Earl of Buchan through Mr. Lear² (who carried a letter of introduction from me to his Lordship when he went to England four or five years ago) thinking it might be satisfactory to you as head (of at least one branch) of the family to be possessed of.

Mrs. Washington & myself propose (on friday or saturday next) making a visit to Doctor Stuart's,³ from whence we shall proceed to the Federal City, and do not expect to return from thence until about saturday or sunday week. If you expect *not to be* embarked *before* that time, we will call as we return and wish you a pleasant passage; but if your embarkation is likely to take place at an earlier day—we wish between this & friday, in a morning's ride come up for that purpose.

Our compliments are presented to Mrs. Fairfax &ca. and I am, at all times Dear Sir Your sincere friend, and affect. & Humble Servt.

[GO WASHINGTON]

* *Fairfax to Washington* *

[DLC]

Mt. Eagle May the 15th. 1798

DEAR SIR

I have received the Packet with your kind Letter. This late Instance of your Friendship has increased my Gratitude which has continued more or less for many years.

²Tobias Lear, Washington's former secretary

³Dr. David Stuart had married Eleanor Custis, the widow of Martha Washington's son, John Parke Custis, who died in 1781. Two of Eleanor's children, George Washington Parke Custis and his sister Nelly, lived at Mt. Vernon with the Washingtons. Stuart was thus family as well as a good friend of Washington's. This was to be Washington's last visit to Hope Park, the Stuart home in southwestern Fairfax County. See Martin Petersilia and Russell Wright, *Hope Park and the Hope Park Mill* (Fairfax, Va.: 1978) 29-60.

I return you many thanks and all the acknowledgements I can make, and now on my departure, I may venture to say yt: [that] I have not ceased almost daily to pray for you for more than twenty years. I have experienced the uncertainty of a maxim laid down by some writers that when a man is laid under obligations which he can never repay that it lessens his Regard for his Benefactor, at least I know that it is not an universal Rule.

I am sorry that I cannot know with any tolerable certainty when the Ship will sail—I have desired Mr Hamilton the owner to ride out this morning as I am not recovered eno[ugh] from my last illness to venture out to day, and I have 9 Hhds [hogsheads] of Tobo. [tobacco] which I wish to dispose of. The last Information I had was that the middle of next week would be extent of the ships Stay—but they never know the time for a Fortnight before.

I write now before your Servant calls lest he should be detained on his Return. To have the Honour of the short visit you propose I cannot expect, yet I should be glad of it & happy to see you and Mrs. Washington either before Friday next, or on your Return from the Federal City, which will probably be before the Ship sails—However I will leave the Letter unclosed till your Man calls. Mrs. Fairfax & Family join me in best compl[imen]ts. and Regards to you and Mrs. Washington & Family, and wishing you every Blessing I remain with much Esteem, DrSir Yr obliged & obedt. Servt

BRYAN FAIRFAX

My Man Guy is returned without enquiring when the Ship is to sail, & without being able to tell how forward she is in loading tho' he is going with me.

I beg that you will not put yourself to the smallest inconvenience in respect to it, happy as I am under a Sense of your many Civilities.

* *Washington to Fairfax* *
[Fitzpatrick, DLC]

Mount Vernon, May 18, 1798.

DEAR SIR

Having occasion to write another letter to Sir John Sinclair,¹ I take the liberty of giving you the trouble of it, and Mrs. Washington begs the favour of you to put her letter to her old neighbor and friend, Mrs. Fairfax,² into a channel for safe delivery, if you should not see her yourself

Knowing, from experience, that Masters of Vessels never sail at the time they first appoint, Mrs. Washington and I propose to call upon you on our return from the City, in full confidence of seeing you then. If, however, contrary to expectation, the Captain of the Vessel you embark on should be more punctual than usual, and we should be disappointed in this, we beg you to receive our ardent wishes for a safe and pleasant passage to England, the perfect restoration when you return. To these wishes let me add assurances of the affectionate regard etc.

[GO WASHINGTON]

¹The letter to Sinclair, to whom Washington had also written a letter of introduction for Fairfax, is in Fitzpatrick *Writings of Washington*, XXXIV, 266 (18 May 1798). An earlier letter also entrusted to Fairfax for delivery is in *ibid.*, 260.

²Sally Cary Fairfax, the widow of George William Fairfax who had formerly lived at Belvoir

** Fairfax to Washington **

[DLC]

Hampton Road June the 17th: 1798

DEAR SIR

The further detention that our Ship has met with here gives me the Lesiure to write to You a few Lines before we take our final Departure It has been to me a very tedious time—indeed I have not for many years past had such an Exercise of Patience as I have had for the last four or five weeks,—first from the delays in setting out when I was anxious to apply the remedy that I thought my health required, next the tediousness of the Passage down, we being a whole week in performing it owing to calms, very light breezes, and even to sundry thunder squalls, for they delayed us by forcing us to come to an Anchor; and last of all the head winds since we arrived here, and add to this the heat on board has been distressing, not being able at any rate to go to my Room till towards the cool of the morning, after attempting to sleep, or rather dosing upon chairs in the Cabin.

We came into this road on Sunday last, when the Captain went to Norfolk. He is very civil—as kind as I could wish him, yet like many others, who strange as it may seem think nothing of disappointing their neighbours, for We have been tantalised with the Hopes of seeing him from time to time almost from the first day of his going up It is true there has been a Sweetheart and a Wife in the way; for when we though him already married, and that on his trip down whilst the ship was loading, behold he was married only on thursday last, The Boat has been to Norfolk every day—and on Friday night the mate on his return told us of his marriage, and that he was certainly to be down with his wife the next day, and that she being to accompany him, he was to remain on board till the first fair wind enabled him to sail, but last night the Boat returned again without him, and is gone up again to day. You may judge of what it is to be thus tantalized when we expect any thing in vain from day to day.

I would not trouble You Sir with these particulars, only on Shipboard our Ideas are pretty much confined to Sea Matters, and I have scarce any thing else to fill up another Farewel letter.

The Pilot has been impatient, for he thinks of how many vessels he might have had the chance to conduct either into this Road or elsewhere.

Many vessels are wind bound here, and lie with us under the Shelter of Sewell's point; there seem now to be ten or twelve Sloops and Schooners bound to Sea collected at this place. What is a little singular, two Sloops loaded with Shingles at Norfolk and bound to N. York, lay along side or not far from us, at the Beginning of the week, and during the course of it they have attempted to get out to Sea, and have been into the Bay four or five Times and have returned here—some days ago on their return they went quite back to Norfolk for provisions; and they are come up and gone back again today, tis supposed for the same Purpose. The Trade is surprisingly increased since I was last in these parts—almost every hour a Vessel is passing either up or down, and sometimes two or three at a time.

We were in hopes about the middle of the week of having the Constellation Frigate from Baltimore, and that we shou'd have the Benefit of her convoy; but in a day or two these Hopes were all gone and we expected to sail in a day or two or rather the first fair wind without her. However the Captain with his new Spouse came on board about 12 o'Clock and told us that the Frigate was certainly on her way down, and would soon be in the Road; which came to pass in the Afternoon. After she had anchored it was judged by those on board of us, that she was too crank, by her heeling too much from a strong easterly Breeze that blew in the afternoon. But this morning (that is monday morning) she appeared to me to have a great Heal to Starboard, so that she may not be so crank as she appeared to be. We now expect to sail under her convoy, perhaps in a day or two—It appears tedious to me because I suffer from the Heat (and it was the Heat of this Summer I much dreaded in the Spring, but little expected that Delays would cause me to partake of it) and don't expect Relief till I get into more temperature at Sea. I thank God I have had tolerable Patience—But I know that I fall vastly short of your Example, in Patience and Fortitude in particular, which I have often thought of, being so deficient herein that I ought to be

ashamed of the little virtue I have For Virtue consists in rising superior to obstacles and surmounting them

Before I left home I heard that it was reported that I was going to England to look after some great Estate there—I gave no cause for any such Report—It must have been a mere Suggestion—It is true I can't tell what may turn out—I have had & have rich Relations with|ou|t apparent heirs but a man may know this without saying anything about it When I went to England before I believe it was suggested to my Brother that I had some view with respect to what might have fallen to me from our Uncle's personal Estate in Yorkshire, and also perhaps with regard to the Intail of Towlston but I medled no more than any indifferent Person, and yet opportunities seemed to be afforded me by my Friends in respect to the latter, by the introduction to the acquaintance of some Lawyers, but I was always blind in taking hints; and was moreover not so inclined—My Brother seemed once offended much with me in something relating to it; but he was like my old Relation in Frederick whom I loved like a second Father—they would both give dark hints which You might unravel afterwards if you could—One day I asked the latter wherein I had offended him—He told me I never shou'd know—And if it was what I suspected I could easily have cleared it up. He gave my Brother reason to believe that he intended to provide handsomely for me, and this was rather conformable to what he himself told me.

You will perceive Sir that I write with Freedom under the Sanction of that old Friendship with which you have so long honoured me

Wishing you and Mrs. Washington & Family every Happiness, I once more bid You adieu, and remain Yr. obliged & affectionate hble Servt.

BRYAN FAIRFAX

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

London August the 21st: 1798

DEAR SIR

I wrote to You from Hampton Road rather a long letter giving a deatil of naval Occurrences, and put the Letter into the Hands of the Pilot who promised to have it sent to Mt. Vernon, and intended on my Arrival to go on with an Account of the same kind, but the night after my arrival I became so unwell & continued in such a State of Depression for many days that I was scarce able to write to my Wife who I suppose would be anxious to hear from me, and now I have waited a little longer after being somewhat mended in order to inform you of the Letters with which You were pleased to favor me, for which I again return you my sincere & grateful Thanks.

We went at last from Hampton Road down to Lynnhaven Bay on the Sunday which was a Fortnight after our Arrival, under Convoy of the Constellation Frigate, and in company with ten or twelve Vessels of which one was a Brig of Force There we had again to wait that night, & the next day & till 12 on tuesday on Acc[oun]t of fresh water which the Frigate expected from Norfolk—We sailed then thro' the Capes with a light wind as the fine fresh Breeze we had for five days began then to die away It was pleasant sailing in such a company—The Light breezes with a small intermission of a calm lasted about 6 days with a smooth Sea & fair. As well as I remember on the 4th day the Frigate fired a Gun & took Leave. We were then so scattered that we did not hear the report of the Gun—before & after the separation several Vessels at different times came athwart us & caused us to give an anxious Look at them, especially after the Separation, but they all appeared to be Americans, one of which spoke us. When we had been out a week the Wind freshened up like one of our Northwesters, and about Noon a large Ship crossed our course some miles ahead for we were going right before the wind—She tacked, and then we judged that she intended to stop us—But I am taken with such a depression of Spirits mixed with a degree of the Cholic, that I must break off for the present—August the 22d.—I

was forced in the Evening to take some Laudanum before I could get quite eased of my Pain—I feel pretty well this morning—but I did not sleep the whole night—

I must resume my account, & abridge it, and write a little smaller for the sake of postage on both sides of the water, for it is $3/4$ for a double Letter from hence to N York.

When we found that the large Ship intended to stop us, we edged away towards her, and bringing to I found quite a new scene—that of boats passing from Ship to Ship at Sea. Our Mate went on board with the papers, and waiting a great while for his Return, we were told at length to make sail for the Commodore who with a Sloop, was about 5 miles to Leeward—when we came up, our Captain went on board, and it was with difficulty he saved his Ship from being carried by the Squadron to Halifax, because of her being cleared out for Rotterdam—and nothing saved him but their having found a Bag of Letters hung over the Ship's Bow ready to be cut away, when the Lieutenant came on board—On opening some of them they became convinced that the Ship was in fact bound to London & at length we were suffered to depart. The Letters of Passengers they did not enquire for or meddle with. After our Fleet from the Capes separated there were two & sometimes three which kept company with us for some days—But we being always the headmost Ship had lost sight of them the day we were stop'd by the English Frigate. At that time whilst we were detained an hour or two Some vessels appearing to the westward the same Frigate was sent in chace; and she soon returned with two of our Comrades—& Capt'n. Bl. met with them on board the Commodore—There was no difficulty in respect to them—they being cleared out for english ports—One of these was the Lexington of Alexandria who sailed after us from thence & with us from the Capes—and after this junction kept company till we had a Storm two or three days afterwards—we lost sight of her in the Storm & never saw her afterwards tho' we sailed nearly with the same Speed.—I find that I shall not be able to croud in what I shall have to write—Besides as this Letter will be directed to You Sir, it may be proper that it should have a Cover—and as to the Expence I know you don't mind it especially as it comes From a Friend who writes to communicate what may be agreeable, so I shall write on in

the rambling manner w[h]ich I only am capable of at present. We had the Storm mentioned and afterwards two Gales—the rest of the Voyage was very good except that I was ill most of the way & was much distressed upon the whole. The last 5 or 6 days I kept my Bed altogether, and found a vast Benefit from it, on account of being out of the way of being exposed, so that I landed so well at Dover that I was enabled in the Afternoon to proceed on to Canterbury, 16 Miles, where I was taken badly again, and continued so with intervals for some time, and even to the present moment, for I am again in pain—following the Advice of Doctr Hepperden & a neighbouring Apothecary. There is one living within two Doors, of the name of Wilson, and another named Griffith almost opposite to my Lodgings. My Neighbours & others open their windows now as I did at Mt Eagle, commonly one window in a Room hoisted about a Foot or two, even in hot weather; for it was mostly the Case in my Journey up from Dover when the Driver would dismount & walk up a rising sort of Hill to ease his horses on account of the excessive heat. I found it a very pleasant Country to pass thro'—fine Roads & scarce any Hills—Trees tho common in Hedges hardly to be seen in woods. I passed one place of a few acres that put me in mind of Mt. Vernon it was a Wilderness, but the Trees were rather thicker, and it always pleased me to see any thing that put me in mind of Virginia.

The Day after my Arrival at Charing cross or the next I waited on Mr. King.¹ He was then at Margate, and was expected in about a Fortnight. On a Gentleman's telling me who seemed to be his Secretary that If I had any Letter or message for him that he would convey it safely—after some hesitation for I hardly Ever know what to do of a sudden I gave him your Letter to send—In something more than a Fortnight I went Again to Cumberland Place—when I went first, I had not then fixed on any Lodgings which I mentioned on being asked my place of residence; and said I only then lodged at the Inn at Charing Cross—never expecting the Honor of a visit from Mr. King especially before I had seen him again—When I went the second time I found he had been in Town and at Charing cross and

¹See G W to B F 15 May 1798, note 1 above

was returned again into the Country not being able at the inn to get sufficient intelligence where my Lodgings were I have since received a civil Letter from Mr. Munroe who I believe lives with him and on Mr. King's desire have promised to call on him again when I return from York where I am hastening to go to get a little breathing from Expenses—For the Coach & chaise Hire will ruin me in my present State when I cannot walk.

The same day on which I first visited Mr. King I also called on Sr. St. Sinclair¹ who was down at Edinburgh—Your kind Lr [letter] of Introduction with the other Letter I left with his Agent who undertook to send them safely. Having parted with these Letters, the conveyance of the Post is reckoned safe, I was unwilling to part with every one which were of such value to me, and kept that for Mr. Strickland 'till I should see him—and also that to Lord Buchan¹ who was also in Scotland to whom I wrote with an Information that I had such a Letter & my Reasons for so doing. And Yesterday I had a very civil Letter from him, inviting me to reside with him while I stay in Scotland if I should be well eno[ugh] hereafter to go there. He speaks of you in the highest terms, and to pay the more regard to your Recommendation He has sent me a Letter of Recommendation to his Sister Lady Ann Agnes Erksine [Erskine] to introduce me to his Brother in Town who is one of the first Counsellors in Town. I have since my Arrival taken on me the Title of Lord Fairfax,² which I should have done some years sooner had I known it was becoming to assume it & that it was not contrary to the American Constitution, and have been cordially received by such of my old Friends as are alive.

Before I Received this Letter I had been to consult Mr. Erskine & take his advice how to proceed in a certain Business—For it has been suggested to me to enquire after a pretty large Estate which I have long heard was entailed—All the Heirs are dead—the last about 3 or 4 years—But I reckon upon nothing as yet—I have not yet seen Mr. Erskine—going to see his Sister to day & him also &

²Fairfax was entitled to assume the title upon the death of Robert the seventh lord in 1793. He signed this and subsequent letters merely 'Fairfax' reflecting his title.

afterwards going to the Exchange for the first time cost me 8/. The other day it cost me 20—to go 14 miles to dine at Enfield & return—At this place I was asked by two Ladies how old you were and when I said about 4 years older than myself, they said you were in the prime of Life, there is such a difference between the english constitutions and our's. There were four in company, and I was the youngest—the master of the House was 75 and seemed hearty—He is a German by Birth but a long resident in London, and a rich merchant I suppose by his fine Seat & country possessions—I have dined from home three times, and each time amongst three or four I was the youngest, except once there was one younger, but three others much older.

Your Letter to Lord Buchan has been of great Service in a particular I didn't look for—His Sister is a religious character, so that I promise myself If I return here in the winter much satisfaction in her company—I am to be with her on Sunday and go with her to the chapel in the yard & spend the day with her. Perhaps it was Lady Huntingdon's chapple—as the House was hers—You were much spoken of today & some mention was made as if you had corresponded with Lady Huntingdon—I understand that you are much esteemed in this Country—I don't mention it as a thing you wish to hear, for it is what you don't seek after nor ever did, blessed with that Popularity which follows a man's actions without being sought after.

Mrs. Washington's Letter on my first arrival with two others of my Sons I put into the Hands of Mr. Athawes who corresponds with her—& could forward it much sooner than I could, for I was not able to find a Post-Office or go to it.

Now at the End of the third day I bring my Letter to a close My Lodgings are in Bedford [Bedford?] Street Covent Garden No. 13. But if you should favor me with a Line, one Directed to Mr. Joseph Beevers or his Care, Martin's Lane Cannon Street would come to Hand, for Mr. Athawes has quitted Business and chiefly resides in the Country—

With my best respects to Mrs. Washington & Family and loving regards to Yourself I am Dear Sir Your most obliged and obedt. Servt.

August the 23d: 1798

I promised to write to Doctr. Craik³ but having been three days about this I must postpone it. I forgot to mention that we had four week's passage—a fast sailing ship overtook us about 3 days before we made the Land that had been but 17 days from Salem. She seemed chasing us for some hours; and must have sailed about the time that our light Breezes became fresh—for We had a fair wind every foot of the way, even into Dover Pier, except 3 hours or so the first day—

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

York Sept. the 7th: 1798

DEAR SIR

I wrote to You another long Letter from London which I put into the Post Office to go by the next Packet to New-York, since w[h]ich I have taken a Journey to this City, and having delivered your kind Letter of introduction to Mr. Strickland [Strickland], have been very civilly treated by him—He desired me to present his respects to You—He remembers meeting me three years ago between George town and Alexandria. He looks remarkably well for his Age. He was however telling a Gentleman yesterday that you would be thought young of your Age even in England I have found some of my old

³Dr James Craik Washington's close friend and physician

Acquaintance alive here and in the neighbourhood, but have as yet made no Enquiry that has proved satisfactory with respect to what I mentioned in my Letter from London. Mr. Erskine has put me into the way which I have not been able to avail myself of from not having seen the Gentleman he advised me to apply to.

How exceeding fluctuating is my health! Last night I began to flatter myself I should miss or get rid of my Cholic for this Spell, not having had a Fit to speak of for six days, tho' in the last week I had it four days running, owing in the Journey to the not excluding the Air from the Chaise as much as was necessary for when I did so the third day I escaped & continued to be clear, except the great depressions thro' the want of Opium, till last night when I had it for some hours,—and to Day it is returned owing to nothing I can think of unless it was stopping in the Street yesterday & going into a House when I was warm from walking, which for two days I had ventured upon. But this custom of stopping I had long avoided at Home. I have also been civilly treated by Mr. Thos. L. Fairfax Son of John who once lived at Liverpool & who sent me over those fine Hounds I imported. But he & his Lady now live at Bath & near Mrs Fx [Fairfax] of Virginia. Colo. Cary sent me a Message to his Sister¹ which I am afraid I delivered rather awkwardly. I never knew all my Life what to do of a sudden, which at different times cause many improprieties which I reflected on with concern, some with respect to your self which you were great eno[ugh]. to overlook.

I have not heard one single article of news since I have been in york which has been near a week, nor have read a Paper—My State in general is too disconsolate at present for any thing—I found the Ride down of Service & seemingly very great after I got out of the way of being injured. Yesterday I engaged a clever Horse to ride every day that I may take at much Exercise as I can before the cold weather sets in. I am to give 9/. a week for the Hire, preferring that to a Purchase as I should be sure to lose in the Sale again when I make an

¹Sally Cary Fairfax the widow of George William Fairfax of Belvoir and sister of Col Wilson-Miles Cary

Attempt to return next Summer Hoping that I shall live to see You again & Mrs. Washington to whom I desire my respectful Regards & kind remembrance to Miss Custis & the Family I remain Dr. Sir with unabated Esteem Yr. obliged & Obedt. Servt.

FAIRFAX

* *Washington to Fairfax* *
[VMHB, Collections of Lord Fairfax]

Mount Vernon, 20th Jny. 1799.

DEAR SIR,

Since your departure from Mount Eagle, I have been favored with three letters from you.—The first, dated in Hampton Road, June the 17th, came speedily to hand;—the 2d. begun on the 21st. and ended the 23rd. of August, in London, and the 3d from York the 7th. of September, at the following times—That from York a day or two before I commenced a journey for Philadelphia, on the 4th of November, and the other from London, a few days after my return from thence, on the 20th. of December —

For the details contained in these several letters, I pray you accept my thanks; and congratulations on your safe arrival in England, although the passage, on the whole, was not altogether as expeditious and agreeable as you expected.—To this prayer, let me add my best wishes for the perfect restauration of your health,—and the accomplishment of such other objects as might have induced you to undertake the Voyage.—After which it would give your friends in this country much pleasure to hail your return.—

For your care of the letters I took the liberty of committing to you, my grateful acknowledgments are offered

When I presented my Valedictory address to the People of the United States, in September, 1796, I little thought that any event would occur in my day, that could again withdraw me from the Retirement after which I had been so long panting; but we know little of ourselves, and still less of the ways of Providence. The injurious treatment this country had received from France, in an open violation of the Treaty between the two Countries, and the laws of Nations. The Insults & indignities with which all our overtures for an amicable adjustment of the disputes were treated — The increasing depredations on our commerce, accompanied with outrage and threats if we did not comply with their demands, leaving no hope of obtaining restitution for the past, or preserving the little that remained, or the country from Invasion, but by the adoption of vigorous measures for self defence having come fully to the view of the People, their resentments have been roused, and with one voice as it were, have made a tender of their lives and fortunes to repel any attempts which may be made on the Constitution or Government of their Country.—in consequence of which, and to be prepared for the dernier resort, if unhappily, we shall be driven to it—Troops are to be raised, and the United States placed in a posture of defence.—Under these circumstances, and it appearing to be the wish of my Countrymen, and the request of the governing Powers that I should take charge of their Armies, I am embarked so far in the business as will appear by my letter to the President of the 13th of July last, which, as it has run through all the News-papers here, and Published in many of the Foreign Gazettes, you probably may have seen, and though still at home, where indeed, I hope to remain, under a persuasion that the French will discover the injustice and absurdity of their conduct;—I hold myself in readiness to gird on the sword if the immergency shall require it.

Notwithstanding, the Spirit of the People is so animated, that party among us who have been uniform in their opposition to call the measures of Government; in short to every Act, either of Executive or Legislative Authority which seemed to be calculated to

defeat French usurpations, and to lessen the influence of that Nation in our Country, hang upon & clog its wheels as much as in them lye [*sic*] and with a rancour and virulence which is scarcely to be conceived; Torturing every act, by unnatural construction, into a design to violate the Constitution—Introduce Monarchy—& to establish an aristocracy—And what is more to be regretted, the same Spirit seems to have laid hold of the Major part of the Legislature of this State, while all the other states in the Union (Kentucky, the child of Virginia, excepted) are coming forward with the most unequivocal evidences by both, for self preservation.—In what such a spirit, and such proceedings will issue, is beyond the reach of short sighted man to predict, with any degree of certainty—I hope well, because I have always believed & trusted, that the Providence which has carried us through a long & painful War with one of the most powerful nations in Europe, will not suffer the discontented among ourselves to produce more than a temporary interruption to the Permanent Peace and happiness of this rising Empire—That they have been the cause of our present disquietudes, and the means of stimulating (by mis-representing the sentiments of the mass of Citizens of this Country) the Directory of France to their unwarrantable Acts—not from more real affection to the Nation than others possess, but to facilitate the design of subverting their own government—I have no more doubt than that I am now in the act of writing you this letter.

It was at the request of the Secretary of War, my journey to Philadelphia was undertaken to assist in the formation of the Augmented Force and to effect some other military arrangements; and although your letter from York of the 7th of September came to hand before I set out, & was taken with me to be acknowledged from thence, yet my time & attention was so much occupied with the business that carried me there, that I never found leisure to do it.

Lady Hungtindon, [*sic*], as you may have been told, was a correspondent of mine;—and did me the honor to claim me as a relation, but in what degree, or by what connection it came to pass, she did not inform me, nor did I trouble her Ladyship with an enquiry —The favorable sentiments which others, you say, have

been pleased to express respecting me, cannot but be pleasing to a mind who always walked on a straight line & endeavoured as far as human frailties, & perhaps strong passions would enable him, to discharge the relative duties to his Maker & fellow-men, without seeking any indirect, or left handed attempts to acquire popularity.

Our crops of Wheat & Indian Corn last year (except in places) were extremely short—The drought of the Autumn exceeded anything that has been recollected, in so much that the Mills were scarcely able to work before New Years day.—and the Fly has again begun its ravages on the Wheat in the Counties above us.—This calamity, with the severity of the Drought on the Fall seeding, has given a discouraging aspect to the ensuing Crop of Winter Grain.—We have the pleasure, frequently, of seeing or hearing from Mrs. Fairfax—and on Wednesday last, Mrs. Washington & myself took a family dinner at Mount Eagle—and left all the family in good health and Spirits in the afternoon—Miss Custis was, at that time, with her mother, at Hope Park,¹ or she would have accompanied us on that visit. She is now returned, and unites with Mrs. Washington & myself in offering best wishes for your health and safe return.—and with very great & sincere esteem & respect, I remain Dear Sir, Your Most obedient, and Affecte Hble. Servant,

G. WASHINGTON

P S. Finding that I could not comprise what I had to say in one sheet of paper, I have rambled on until I have almost filled a second.

See G W to B F 15 May 1798, note 3 above

For Mr. Wilkes has quit the business and chiefly resides in the country —
 With my best respects to Mr. Washington & Family and loving regards to
 Yourself I am Dear Sir Your most obliged and obedient Son
 August the 21st
 1798.
 I promised to write to Dad:
 I had but hardly been three days
 alone that I was importuned to
 I ought to mention that we have been
 in the hospital — it is not a bad thing, but
 as about 4 days before we reached the land I had
 and then 10 days from London. The wind blowing us
 for some hours and must have lasted about the time
 that we left. I was become fresh for we had a fair
 wind very much of the way even into Dover. But except I have seen
 the sea —

The Right Honorable
 Myra Lord Fairfax
 21st 23rd Aug^r 1798

Bryan's letter 21 August 1798, signed "Fairfax," reflecting his assumption of the title, endorsed by Washington at bottom right. Library of Congress.

14. 11. 1776.
 Dear Sir,
 I have the honor to receive
 your letter of the 10th inst. and
 am glad to hear that you are
 well. I am also glad to hear
 that you are still in the
 service of your country. I am
 sure that you will continue to
 be a great blessing to your
 country. I am, Sir, very
 respectfully,
 Your obedient servant,
 George Washington.

* *Fairfax to Washington* *
[DLC]

London April the 28th: 1799.

DEAR SIR

I was much pleased last week in receiving Your Favor of the 20th: January by the hands of Mr. Dandridge. And tho' I am thinking now of my Return, and with anxious expectation of being able to set off in a few weeks I could not omit acknowledging the Receipt of it, so sensible am I of the Favor you continue to do me.

I am very glad to find that some of the Letters I mustered up resolution eno[ugh] to write on my Arrival have got safe to hand, especially those to you, for I was then very weak indeed, but at present am very well and have continued so for a Week past which is I think a longer space of uninterrupted Health than I have had Since Christmas, having been afflicted most of the winter—at York with my old complaint. I thank God for my present good State and the Prospect of it's continuance. At York I heard that You were very ill last Summer, but had the Pleasure of hearing at the same time that you were quite recovered in October.

With respect to your having acceded to the wishes of your Country in taking the Command of the Army I was persuaded it proceeded from a desire of serving it at a time when it was earnestly required, and this when I heard it wondered why you would accept of an inferior command after having filled the highest Station so long. In my opinion it was one Instance among many of your preferring the public good to every other consideration. Yet still I hope that You will have no Occasion for any further operations than the present preparations, for with you I trust in a kind providence, and several times have hoped that as America had so lately undergone a long course of Affliction that she wo'd [would] not for many years experience any of the great troubles of War,—especially as she felt of late the Scourge of Pestilence, or something like it.

I thank you sincerely for your Prayers & good wishes with respect to my restoration to Health & to my Family and Friends, which would now prove a great Blessing even in the decline of Life My brother when he was ye [the] first time with his Family in England I heard should say that he felt like a Fish out of Water, which I have often thought of since my Arrival

When I was in England before I compared myself to an Indian who longed for his native Woods—But that strong desire did not come upon me 'till I had been some months here—But now in a measure I had it from my first arrival. Yet this seems to be a desireable country to live in, but a Man must be born here to relish it much, because of that natural Attachment to one's native Land.

With respect to the other Objects of my voyage for which you are pleased to express also your good wishes, particularly the matter of Estates to which I may be entitled, I have been often told from time by Friends that I should finish one thing first—one thing at a time. And this has kept me more in the dark than I need to have been And I have at last got more insight by having recourse to the Study of the Law myself than I had otherwise thro' these delays been able to obtain. And I have also had the Caution of Friends—that tho' the object may be great—the Uncertainty of the Law is such that a man should be very wary in engaging in it These things have hitherto kept me from going further than the Outlines of Enquiry and that too superficially to avail much One Friend indeed in a Letter mentions some in Possession being alarmed at hearing of my Arrival—Yet think it very hard that those who have long been in Possession should now be disturbed

I am very sorry to find that the Spirit which had been observed before I left home seems rather to increase, but I hope it will not continue, and that it may please God to restore a Spirit of Concord & Unanimity, and this for the same Reason as had been already mentioned because America has lately undergone a long scene of troubles As a Man of Peace it is very irksome to me to see such growing Dissentions, being convinced that they originate from an evil Spirit, who can influence & blind the minds of men whenever

permitted so to do. So that we must always look ultimately to the supreme disposer of all things.

The Winter here has been very severe, & continued long—& every Body speaks of the present Spring as uncommonly disagreeable from the much Rain & much cold damp Air. The Drought you had last Fall perhaps might have aided the destructive Fever at Phila. which I find raged with violence—But the Fly is an alarming circumstance to the Farmer. Lord Hawke is a great Farmer in Yorkshire. I forget many particulars—one thing I remember—He makes or has made 2800 Bushels of Oats in a year. His being much engaged in this Line caused us to have much conversation about You, and I was sorry that I was not better qualified than I was to give him more particular Information than I did. He was surprised however to find that your Wheat Fields scarcely produced ten Bushels to the Acre, as their Lands yeild [*sic*] a short Crop when they produce but twenty. He seemed to dwell much upon the practice they have of studying the nature of the Soil, and the successive as well as the kind of successive Crops they intend to raise from it. He did not begin with wheat after a Fallow as I always thought was the Custom here according to what I have read from the old Books, but with some other Sort, such as Turneps—Clover—& something else—making the Process very different from what I had been accustomed to understand it. Such as wheat first after being well manured, then Oats & Barley—then clover for two or three years—Lord Hawke was exceedingly kind to me in instances that shewed a friendly temper.

This of Farming reminds me to inform you that I have not had the Pleasure of seeing Sir John Sinclair—and it has happened unexpectedly—Before I went the last time to York, I called at the House then with an Intention of leaving my Address as usual but after the Coachman had knocked long & no one appearing I returned—And this since my [torn] I called again—& found the House seemingly empty.

And now I cannot but repeat how very friendly Lord Buchan has been by Letter from him & also introductory to others—His Brother & his Sister also, Lady Ann Erskine who succeeds the Countess of

Huntingdon in her extensive Concerns—for in this Lady I find another Sister as well as Relation—We became soon acquainted and have continued to be very friendly—I am going this moment to see her at 5 o'Clock and expect the Satisfaction of drinking tea with her, & then hearing the Organ & a good Sermon at the Chapel which adjoins the House. Going to her House has afforded me the best Entertainment I have had in England.—For my Time has been mostly an unhappy time since I left Home and some part of it distressing, such as I have passed at home under Spells of the Cholic

I have Reason to be very thankful to You for the Attention You have been pleased to pay to my Wife & Family—& was much pleased to hear that you & Mrs Washn. had dined lately at Mt. Eagle I now conclude with my best Compliments to Mrs. Washington, Miss Custis if still so & all of the Family at Mt. Vernon. & beg you to accept of Assurances of the greatest Regard & unabated Affection from Dr Sir Yr. most obliged & Obedt. St.

FAIRFAX

I have seen lately in a Book Mr. King lent me, two Views, one of Mt. Vernon Ho[use] & the Hill before it, & the other of the River from thence, both as unlike the true Prospects as they could well be. The Author a late Traveller, who like most other travellers seems to have received the 1st Information—yet not so many mistakes as I expected.

* *Washington to Fairfax* *
[Fitzpatrick, DLC]

Mount Vernon, November 26, 1799.

MY LORD:

In the early part of this month, I went up to Difficult-run to examine with more accuracy than I had ever done before, the small tract of Land you were so obliging (many years ago) to accomodate me with, for a Stage for my Wagons whilst I had plantations in Berkeley County; to see if it would *now* (having many years since removed my people from those Lands) answer for a small Farm; those around me being overstocked with labourers.

I was unable, with the assistance of several of the Neighbours thereabouts, to survey the lines, or more than one corner of the tract. There was also a corner to the Land lately belonging to the Earl of Tankerville, and at the end of the first course after leaving the run (where it was supposed the upper corner tree thereon formerly stood). From this, *well known corner* neither line tree nor corner tree could be found; the next, called for by the Deed, was a white oak on the bridge branch. In running the course of the Deed from thence, it crossed the main (Leesburgh) road much lower, than those present, conceived it ought to have done; the concurrent opinion being, that this course and Tankerville's were the same; and it was well known to them *all* that the latter crossed the Road higher up.

The person present, who had it most in his power to give correct information, attended for other purposes than to be useful to me; for when he found my line and Tankervilles did not accord, agreeably to the received opinion, he (William Shepherd) attempted to impress a belief that a very narrow-pointed gore, of a tract of 12,000¹ and odd acres, belonging to the late Thos. Lord Fairfax, run in between; and when it was observed that this was as improbable, as unheard of, by any of them before, it eked out by degrees, that his object was to deceive, until he could enter the gore as vacant land for himself.

¹The former "Manor of Great Falls." See Kilmer and Sweig, *Fairfax Family*, 63-65.

I have troubled you with these details by way of an apology for the liberty I am about to take (if you see no impropriety in granting it) of asking, having heard that the above mentioned tract of twelve thousand and odd acres was a bequest to you, or your sons, by the late Thomas Lord Fairfax, for the courses, or so many thereof, together with such of your Towlston tract, on Difficult run, below and dividing the separate survey of 275 acres made for one Norris, as will enable me, not only to discover my own lines, but whether there is any vacancy between them the Lands adjoining. To accomplish this, it will not escape your penetration, that there must be some corner; or line, of one or both of the tracts I have enumerated, and mine the same; otherwise the three plats (or so much of them as is essential to my purpose) could not be connected together so as to elucidate the point in question.

Having had abundant proof of your readiness to oblige me on all occasions, I will add nothing further in excuse for asking this favour. As it is very probable Mr. Ferdn. Fairfax will make you a visit shortly I will be glad to be informed of his arrival, being informed that the land adjoining me, above (Ld. Tankerville's) is now in his possession. Sincerely wishing you a return of good health. I am with very great esteem etc.

[GO: WASHINGTON]

** Washington to Fairfax **

[VMHB, Collections of Lord Fairfax]

Mount Vernon 30th Nov 1799

MY LORD,

I thank you for the courses of so much of your land on Difficult, as had any relation to my small tract at the Bridge, over that stream; and for the communication contained in your favour of the 28th Instt

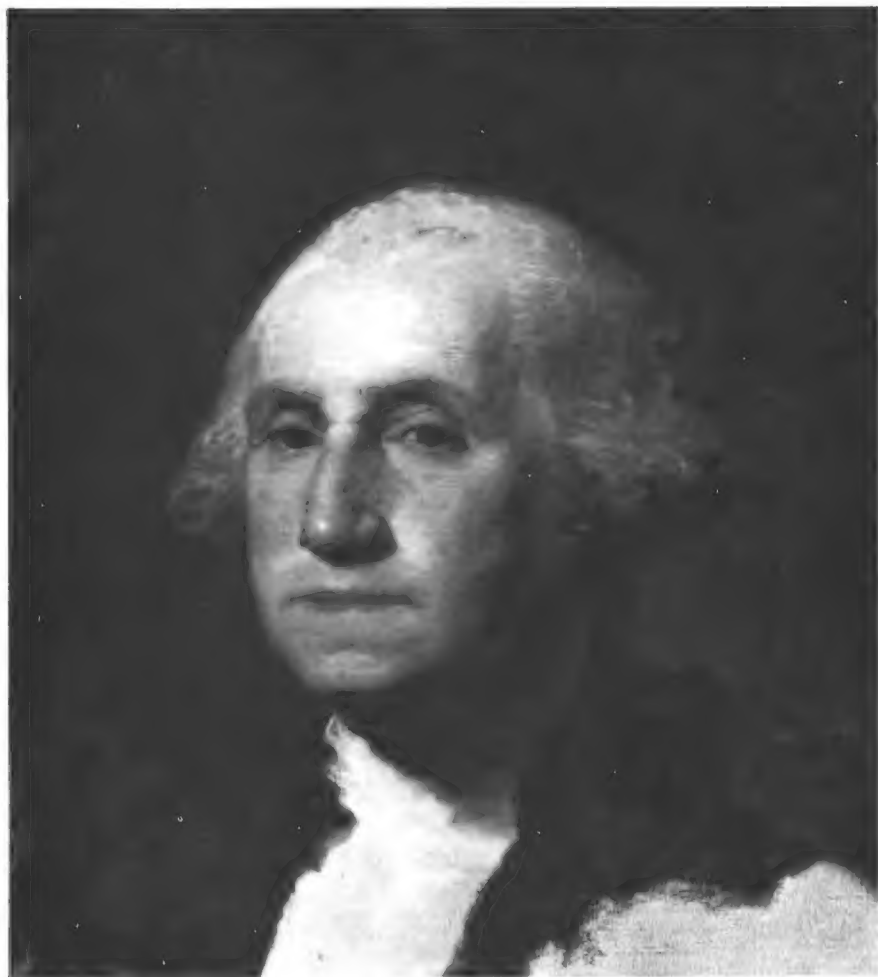
The information derived from these sources, has satisfied me that the opinion of the Borderers on my land that it extended to Tankervilles line:—and my own opinion (when I found the lines separated at the Bridge Branch) that what lay between them was vacant, is erroneous:—and it has, of course, arrested all proceedings of mine to obtain it as waste land.—

The smallness of my tract (275 Acs only, by Norris's Survey) and the pillage of its timber,—together with the clearing of a part thereof (where useless to me) by Muir, rendered the gore which had been deemed mine, of some importance to the tract; altho' the land is hilly—broken—and the soil and wood thin,—especially in the article of timber;—so far as I could form an opinion by running the course of my Deed.—Yet, even under these circumstances, such an addition might have enabled me to cut down more of the 275 acres.—which, small as it is, I am told is to have part taken away by an older Patent of Lewis's; which calls for a straight line from my corner at the *old ford* at Difficult, to my upper corner thereon; & which, will take away some of the best land in the bend of the run.—The right to do this you, perhaps, can judge better than I who have no knowledge of the property thereabouts.—

As you hold the land on the North & East of my tract, and (according to information) Mr. Ferd. Fairfax possesses that which is on the South & Wt. nothing remains to be done but in the settled and temperate part of the ensuing Spring if health will permit, for Your Lordship Mr. Fairfax & myself to repair to the scene—agree upon—and mark our lines of separation to prevent encroachment on either side in future.—

Mrs. Washington unites in best wishes for your restored health—and in respect to your Lady and family with Your Lordships Most Obedt. and Affectionate Hble. Servant

[GO: WASHINGTON]



George Washington by Gilbert Stuart, detail, painted from life in 1796. Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, and The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.